

# Elgin County Railway Museum

## Collection Development Policy

Effective Date: March 19 2015

Authority: Board Motion

Revised:

The Elgin County Railway Museum Collection Development Policy sets forth the goals with respect to the development of the permanent and education collections held within the Michigan Central Locomotive Repair Shops building and other storage locations. The policy outlines responsibilities, standards, and ethics for collection development activities.

Focus of collection development:

1. The development of the collections follows the focus established by the mission statement
2. Priorities for collection development are established within the current long-term plan
3. In general, collection development priorities include those objects, photographs and archival materials that both support the interpretation of the Michigan Locomotive Repair Shops building and the history of rail transportation in St. Thomas and Elgin County.
4. Priorities for collection development address weaknesses in the collection
5. Priorities also consider the capacity of the organization to house and care for materials
6. The museum will commit to the ethical behaviour relating to collection development
7. The museum will meet all municipal, provincial and federal legislative requirements that impact on collection artifacts or materials

Resources:

It is recognized that priorities will change over time and according to storage capabilities, future exhibition and education projects and special events and the recognition of deficiencies in the collection. The purchase of objects necessary to address gaps in the collection will be done upon budget approval of the Board of Directors.

## Responsibilities:

The responsibility for the development of the collection resides with the designated staff person, with advice from the committee. In the absence of such a staff position, the responsibility rests with the Museum Manager and/or the chair of the committee. Each assumes an active role in the community with regard to maintaining contacts with potential donors and awareness of auctions, dealers etc.

Elgin County Railway Museum  
Collections Management Policy

Effective: January 26 2015

Authority: Board Motion

Revised:

**Mission Statement:**

To preserve, teach and display to the public, the rich heritage of the railroads and their role in the development of St. Thomas and Elgin County, through the operation of a museum that meets Standards for Community Museums in Ontario. (approved December 6, 2008)

**Purpose:**

This collections management policy sets forth the goals with respect to managing the collections. The policy outlines responsibilities and set standards for all collections related activities. The collection is under the trusteeship of the Board of the Elgin County Railway Museum. The collection is held and managed in the public trust. These guidelines are in compliance with accepted professional standards governing ownership of cultural property. It is intended that this policy be reviewed as needed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the institution.

**Primary Goals:**

1. Explain the standards of documentation
2. Define the acquisition process, including conditions of acceptance; to the end the organization will maintain a collections management procedures manual describing the steps required to implement this policy; the manual will be in accord with contemporary collections management practice, and will be revised according to the need.
3. Define the conditions and procedures for permanent removal of objects from the collection
4. Define the ethical standards that must be met by museum staff and volunteers and the Board in all collections transactions, including avoid conflicts of interest
5. Define the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers, as they relate to the collection.

## Collection Goals:

In support of its mission statement, the museum will collect vehicles, equipment, artifacts and documents pertaining to the rail transportation industry. The museum will consider the best current scholarship in railroad history and historic preservation theory and practice in setting collection goals and objectives.

On a permanent and temporary basis, the organization collects objects, photographs, printed and audiovisual material pertaining to the rail history of St. Thomas and Elgin County in accordance with the mission statement. Such collections are made for the purposes of documentation, research, exhibition and interpretation. To this end, the organization seeks;

1. To preserve the collection for future generations by all appropriate means
2. To display portions of the collection through a museum which is open to the public on a regular basis
3. To maintain a hands-on education collection for education and public programs
4. To contextualize selected collections by displaying and operating them in an historically appropriate setting using both original and replicated objects

The organization recognizes the importance of experimental learning for its visitors and users. In fulfillment of this need, and to ensure the integrity of the permanent collection, the organization collects and manages objects separate from the permanent collection to be used for the purpose of enhancing the learning experience during tours, exhibitions, education programs and special events. Priorities for the education and interpretation collection are described in the Education and Interpretation Policy.

As the policy-setting body, the Board of Directors represents the final authority in the operation of the museum. The board appoints the members and staff responsible for implementing this collection policy. The Collections Committee reports to the Board about acquisitions, and requests must be approved for any disposal of any assets.

## Acquisition Procedures:

It is the policy of the museum to own all objects entrusted to its long term care. It is also the policy of the museum to seek unconditional gifts to be used in the best interest of the museum. Offers of conditional gifts, leases, and loans must be evaluated for their potential to divert institutional resources away from museum owned objects.

## Criteria for evaluating all acquisitions:

All proposed acquisitions, including potential utility items, are to be evaluated against the criteria listed below. In cases of utility items acquired for trade or other use, exceptions can be granted for deviation from relevance to the mission statement, but only after careful consideration.

Relevance to the Mission Statement: factors such as rarity or typically, provenance and interpretive potential will be reviewed when considering relevance. Materials that are also in danger of loss or destruction are given priority consideration.

Present condition and documentation: A complete object is preferred over an incomplete one however an incomplete object or one that is in poor condition may be considered if a better example is not known to be available and it fills a gap in the collection. Well documented materials with a history of manufacture, ownership and use are also preferred over items lacking documentation.

The museum's ability to care for and conserve the object: An evaluation of the requirements for storage and conservation,( including track space and indoor storage space in the case of rail vehicles ), must be made. These requirements must be carefully weighed against the needs of the existing collection.

Duplication of existing objects in the collection: Duplication alone, in either ECRM's or other museum's collections, is not necessarily a reason for rejection, as many such objects existed in trains. If the duplicate already in the collection is in poorer condition, it may become eligible for deaccessioning and/or disposal. Duplication which is considered to not be in the best interest of the museum, can be a reason for rejection. Duplicate items may also be used in the museum's education collection.

Completeness of title: The Museum shall verify ownership by appropriate means prior to accepting a gift or entering into a purchase agreement. The museum will not acquire objects

when legal ownership cannot be substantiated to the satisfaction of the Board using accepted museum standards as a guide.

Documentation: Objects accepted for accession will be registered in accordance with accepted museum registration procedures. The following information should be included: a temporary receipt, a deed of gift for donated objects, ( or bill of sale for purchased objects ), condition of the gift, if any, and a condition report. Accessioned objects are added to the accession register.

Written records will be kept providing a summary of why the object was acquired and accessioned. The records will document the decision process, identifying how the acquisition criteria were applied.

## Ethics of Acquisition

The museum will acquire materials only if it has adequate resources to document, preserve, store, research, exhibit and interpret those collections. The organization will not directly or indirectly acquire material:

1. Which has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any provincial or national statute
2. Which has been collected or otherwise transferred in contravention of the 1970 UNESCO convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property ( or any similar statutes ) as ratified by Canada June 28,1978; If in addition to the preceding, there is reason to believe that the object's recovery involved recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of known archaeological sites or from illegal clandestine excavations;
3. Which has a questionable, undetermined or unethical history of ownership

Additional Laws and Regulations Related to Collecting: In situations where copyright is of relevance, the organization will respect the provisions of the Copyright Act (1970. c30,1988.c30.1997,c32). The organization also respects the freedom of Information Act as pursuant to the Municipal Act, and the Firearms Act.

Collections Management and Conservation Committee: There will be a collections committee composed of representatives of the membership, at least one of whom will be a board member. Any member of the Elgin County Railway Museum is eligible to serve on the committee. Members may also be sought from the community at large for the knowledge and expertise they may bring. Membership in the Collections Management and Conservation Committee is approved by the board of directors. The Committee will present a report on the

collection at the annual meeting of the organization and from time to time in the organizations publications.

**Personal Collecting by Staff and Board:** Personal collecting is defined as the acquisition by staff ,volunteers and board members of an object similar or related to that which the organization collects or intends to acquire. All employees, volunteers and board members are required to declare a conflict of interest when such situations arise. Staff members/volunteers are required to offer the organization the opportunity to acquire objects considered or obtained for a personal collection.

The museum will keep a periodically updated paper or electronic copy of collections records off-site in a secure location at the County Archives in the data base.

### Mode of Acquisition:

1. Objects are acquired by donation, purchase, bequest or exchange
2. An acquisition by purchase will be made upon approval of a purchase order by the president of the Board and the Treasurer.
3. Decisions regarding acquisitions by donation are made by the designated staff person/volunteer in consultation with the Collections Management and Conservation Committee.
4. All acquisitions involving transfer of ownership and/or responsibility must be accompanied by a signed gift agreement or other proof of legal title to the object, such as a transfer of title form or bill of sale.
5. Bequests are considered for acceptance or rejection in the same manner as other gifts
6. No acquisition will be made where the conditions of acquisition may restrict the use or disposition of that object in fulfilling the goals of the organization.

### General Provisions:

#### Maximum Use Consistent with Goals:

The organization will encourage maximum use of its collections to the extent that the integrity of the collection is not compromised and the use remains consistent with its overall goals and ethics. It is recognized that deterioration and destruction of some objects may occur within the course of normal operations. The organization may acquire for its interpretive collection that do not become a part of the permanent collection and are not subject to its provisions.

#### Cooperation with Other Institutions:

The organization will cooperate with museum's institutions and agencies in regards to research and deaccessioning.

#### Appraisals:

The organization will not provide appraisals for tax deduction or other external purposes. Where objects are being offered for the permanent collection, the organization may assist donors in obtaining appraisals for tax deduction purposes. Where the organization lacks sufficient internal expertise or the appraisal limit is beyond that permitted by Revenue Canada. Whether the organization pays the appraisal costs the appraisal cost is at the discretion of the Board.

#### Public Record:

The organization will maintain a on-line public record of its collection

#### Flexibility and Review:

There is a need for a collections management policy to be flexible. Major donations or bequests may arise that would make the policy seem restrictive. The collections management policy shall be periodically reviewed.

#### Deaccessioning:

Deaccessioning refers to the permanent removal of collection materials which have been acquired on a permanent basis. In order to maintain a relevant collection in accord with the goals and priorities of the policy, it may be necessary, from time to time, to deaccession materials.

The decision to deaccession must, upon recommendation of the collections management and conservation committee, or designate, receive the approval of the board. In deaccessioning material from the permanent collection, the organization will adhere to the following standards:

1. The organization will not acquire materials with the definite intention of eventual deaccession
2. Collections which have been expended through use or which have minimal value or significance to the organization may be intentionally deaccessioned. Other criteria for



deaccessioning including poor quality, poor condition, duplication, the possibility of upgrading the collection by exchange or other transaction.

3. Deaccessioned materials may also be moved to the utility or education collections, or be dismantled for use as salvaged materials.
4. Collections may be deaccessioned for the purpose of exchange or gift to another tax exempt, non-profit, educational institution dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage. Second consideration will be given to disposal through public auction advertised in the appropriate media. Of objects not sold at public auction, third consideration will be given to disposal through a dealer.
5. In the event of accidental loss or destruction, a report in writing to the board will be made
6. The organization will do its utmost to ensure that deaccessioned collections which are significant to the cultural heritage of Ontario and Canada are retained in Canada
7. The organization will do its utmost to ensure that deaccessioned collections remain in public trust
8. Deaccessions will adhere to applicable provincial and Canadian laws and international agreements and treaties.
9. Prior to deaccessioning, materials will be thoroughly researched and documented (except as prohibited by accidental loss or destruction), on standard forms. These records will be maintained by the organization as a permanent public record
10. Where deaccessioning involves the transfer of ownership or responsibility, appropriate documents will be used.
11. Prior to deaccessioning through intentional discard, sale, trade or exchange or gift, the fair market value of the object will be determined, if necessary, by, an independent appraisal.
12. Funds resulting from a deaccession shall be retained for collections acquisition or conservation.

### Rail vehicles:

Original locomotives, cars, self-propelled equipment, maintenance of way equipment, and other vehicles or equipment capable of operating on rails, except those defined as motor vehicles. Also included are full-size replica rolling stock which, through association or passage of time, have acquired value and status as being of historic nature. A rail vehicle that was subsequently used for another purpose, such as structure, may be classified as either a rail vehicle or a structure.

**Motor Vehicles:** Vehicles originally built to operate under their own power, or to be towed, upon public or private roadways. These vehicles normally have pneumatically inflated rubber tires, but may have solid rubber or metal tires.

**Architecture and Civil Engineering:** Buildings maintained in place or removed to the museum grounds from other locations with express purpose of preserving and exhibiting them in the context of the museum's mission. These include structures associated with railroading which may not fit conventional building descriptions, such as turntables, concrete phone booths or gang boxes. Such acquisitions will be evaluated so as not to compromise the commemorative integrity of the site.

Also included in this category are fragments, such as details, stones, doors and other building materials which architectural in origin but which do not constitute a reproducible whole.

**Civil Engineering:** Right-of-way, bridges and right-of-way fragments or elements such as track materials, retaining walls and culverts.

**Other Three-Dimensional Artifacts:** These are artifacts that are relevant to, and consistent with, the purposes and activities of the museum. These include small objects that do not belong in the rail vehicles ,motor vehicles and supporting facilities- signals, lights, bells, whistles, number boards, builder's plate, control equipment and signage. Also included are employees and service-related objects such as tools, uniform, ticket punches, hand lanterns, dining car china and serving implements.

**Photographs, Documents and other Printed Matter:** Primary materials including railroad periodicals, photographs, artwork, records and correspondence, technical books, employee timetables and training materials, drawings, printed paper ephemera, such as public timetables and promotional materials, transit advertising and maps. Secondary materials: include general interest railroad-subject books, films and videos, rail fan-type magazines and railroad historical society publications.

**Parts and Repair Items:** Parts and repair items are generally not recognized as being part of the collection, but attention is called to the historic nature and difficulty in replacing certain parts. A rail vehicle may have been acquired as a source of parts and repair items and as such will not be listed in the museum's roster.