ACCESSION POLICY

In accordance with its stated mission, the Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission (Commission) is dedicated to the collection, preservation, exhibition, and study of the historical, ethnological, and cultural materials relevant to the geographic or thematic sites or areas they manage.

The accession of materials shall be the responsibility of the Commission and staff of the Commission. The collection shall be systematically expanded and shall interpret Montana heritage relevant to the geographic or thematic sites or areas managed by the Commission for the benefit of the citizens of Montana and visitors to the state. The themes for Alder Gulch, developed by an ad-hoc sub-committee of the P&I Committee in December 1999, are:

- Western US gold rush and mining
- Montana territorial legislature and politics
- Native peoples of the Alder Gulch corridor
- Settlement and development of the Alder Gulch corridor
- Bovey collections, family, or VC activities

The following policies relate to new acquisitions:

1. It shall be the policy of the Commission to acquire new donations of high and exceptional quality and to reject items of secondary or tertiary* significance. New acquisitions shall be made for exhibit, study, or conservation purposes. Details of accession/disposition criteria and intended use are described in detail in the Collections Policy & Procedure Manual.
2. Offers of donation shall be presented to the Curator of Collections or designated staff. As soon as possible following an offer of donation, staff will prepare a list of intended donations for review by the Executive Director and the Preservation & Interpretation Committee of the Commission (P&I Committee).
3. Sole and final decision on the accession of new acquisitions shall be made by the P&I Committee. A list and detailed explanation of new accessions shall be submitted to the Commission quarterly or as requested by the Commission.
4. Following approval by the P&I Committee, an accession statement (Deed of Gift) listing all donated items shall be signed by the donor and the Executive Director or his/her designee. This Deed of Gift shall serve as fee simple title for these gifts.
5. All donations to the Commission are to be made as outright and unconditional gifts. Items that may duplicate existing collections or items of secondary importance may be accepted provided an acceptable intended use can be presented by the staff supporting the donation, and provided the donor fully understands and accepts in writing (by signing the Deed of Gift) that the long term disposition of any donation is at the sole discretion of the Commission. It is the responsibility of the Curator of Collections or designated staff to assure this understanding by the donor.
6. The origin, ownership, and authenticity of the intended donation shall be verified by curatorial staff before donation. Verification or lack thereof shall be presented to the P&I Committee at the time of review of the offered donation. If the origin, ownership, or authenticity of an item cannot be verified, the Committee shall decline the donation.
7. Donations may be tax deductible. The Commission will not assume responsibility for providing an evaluation or appraisal of the material.
8. As necessary, potential donors may be informed of the following deaccession policy: As allowed by law, a trust fund will be established which shall be the recipient of unrestricted monetary donations,

donations specified for collections care and of the proceeds of the sale of deaccessioned items from the Commission collections. The principle of this account shall not be expended without the explicit approval of the Commission, and shall be used for the improvement or acquisition of collections, both personal and real property.

The following policies apply specifically to the formal accession of objects purchased by the State of Montana from the Bovey Estates in 1997 (existing collections). These policies do not preclude the above policies.

1. It shall be the policy of the Commission to retain and preserve those objects of high and exceptional quality and to reject items of secondary or tertiary significance. Accession of existing collections shall be made for exhibit, study, public use, or conservation purposes.
2. The initial decision as to the disposition for each object is made by the Curator of Collections and is based on interpretive themes and criteria described above.
3. In cases of great redundancy, a sample selection of the object or group of objects in the best condition will be retained. Consideration must also be given to the long-term exhibit needs of the 250 structures in Virginia City and Nevada City. Sampling considerations for archaeological artifacts are different from accession criteria for other types of objects, and are detailed in the Collections Policy & Procedure Manual.
4. A list and description of accessions and inventoried objects, with their recommended disposition, shall be prepared by Curatorial staff and submitted to the P&I Committee quarterly or as requested by the Committee. Sole and final decision on the accession of materials from the existing collections shall be made by the P&I Committee. The approved list shall then be submitted to the Commission quarterly or as requested by the Commission.

*Primary, secondary or tertiary significance: refers to the historic or aesthetic value of a piece, the intrinsic qualities of an object that contribute to our knowledge of a place or time. This includes the provenance, aesthetics, production techniques, and other factors, as well as the themes described above. An object of primary significance is one with high historic value or relationship to the themes listed above as well as criteria of condition and intended disposition or use. An object of secondary or tertiary significance is one of lesser historic/aesthetic value or for which a less direct or no connection to the themes above can be established.

Approved by Senator Dale Mahlum, Chairman & Jeffrey Tiberi, Executive Director