



Scope of Collection Statement and Collection Plan

The Danbury Museum & Historical Society Authority (hereafter Danbury Museum) fulfills its responsibility for managing its properties and collections by adopting as a board policy this Scope of Collections Statement (SOCS) and Collections Management Policy. Together these two statements outline the parameters and themes of collecting; the principles which underpin the collecting activity and the ethical considerations involved in both of these activities.

A Scope of Collections Statement is a comprehensive statement which specifically defines the types of objects a museum collects and why it does so. It describes what the collection includes, what to add, what not to add, and what may need to be removed from the collection.

On a practical level, the Scope of Collections Statement is a valuable tool for museum professionals and others who actively work with collections. The SOCS describes the museum's collection activities to the public, volunteers, and donors as well as to the staff who work with collections. It acts as a road map which guides the collection committee of the board of directors in evaluating new acquisitions, in budgeting, in allocating limited resources, and in overall planning and management of the museum's collections. Defining the museum's scope of collections is especially useful in justifying donation refusals. The Statement can also help to decide which museum objects might be appropriate for hands-on-use and which might be appropriate candidates for Deaccession. Materials that fall outside the collecting scope and multiple duplicates are not actively collected or retained. Collections will, to the extent possible, anticipate future research needs.

A. History of the Collection

The Danbury Museum and Historical Society has evolved out of efforts to preserve endangered historic properties. One of the City's oldest structures, the Rider House on Main Street, would have been demolished in 1941 to make way for a gas station had it not been for the intervention of concerned citizens (including the Mary Wooster DAR Chapter). After raising money to purchase this property, these citizens founded the Danbury Historical and Arts Center.

A merger, in 1947, between the Scott-Fanton Museum and the Danbury Historical and Arts Center, saw the creation of the Danbury Scott-Fanton Museum & Historical Society Inc. During the 1950s and 60s, the museum acquired the John Dodd Hat Shop, the Ward House, the Charles Ives birthplace, two one room schoolhouses and erected Huntington Hall, where many of its exhibits have been displayed.

In 2004, the Museum added the Marian Anderson Studio to its collection. Famed contralto Marian Anderson made Danbury her home for more than 50 years. The studio was moved to the Main Street campus of the museum in 1999. Restoration of the studio was completed in early 2004. 2006 saw the merger of the Danbury Scott-Fanton Museum with the City of Danbury and a new entity was born on July 1, 2008: the Danbury Museum and Historical Society Authority.

B. Primary Spatial and Temporal Ranges

The singular spatial (geographic) range of interest for all collecting is Danbury, Connecticut.

The temporal range for collection artifacts is broad. Material is collected from all periods to document the history and cultures of Danbury, Connecticut. This long time scale provides depth to the current and potential interpretive programs and exhibits.

C. Thematic Statement

The collections at the Danbury Museum. document the social, cultural, political, religious, military, medical, industrial, and technological history (as well as the daily lives) of the people of Danbury, Connecticut. These collections illuminate broad themes in our history:

1. Daily Life

The domestic and business environments and the intersections and tensions between public and private life will be explored by the museum. The collections will reflect the changing notions of home and family life, and how individuals have used the domestic and business spheres to reinforce or challenge the accepted ideas of family, gender roles, community, age, religion, and the division of labor.

2. Industrial Life

The collections of the Danbury Museum will reflect the diversity of industry that has shaped and reshaped life in Danbury, Connecticut, over time; how, after the collapse or decline of the hatting industry, the people of Danbury “reinvented” their lives in part because of changes in American life itself.

3. Environmental

A focus of Danbury Museum collections explores the relationship between Danbury residents and the natural environment—how our history and lives have been shaped by the geography, topography, climate and natural resources of the region and how we have shaped and reshaped places and spaces.

D. Collection Content Summary

Since its inception, the collections of the Danbury Museum have expanded from objects housed in a WWII-surplus Butler building (Huntington Hall) to the addition of historic structures and the creation of offices, a research library and archive, and a permanent exhibit hall within Huntington Hall. Guided by the spatial, temporal, and thematic parameters the collections of the Danbury

Museum include historic buildings, artifacts, archival material and photographs, and library material.

Historic Structures are buildings with sufficient integrity and provenance to make them worthy of preservation and interpretation. Historic structures currently part of the Danbury Museum collection include the 1785 John & Mary Rider House (1785), the John Dodd Hat Shop (1790), Marian Anderson's rehearsal studio, The Little Red Schoolhouse, the King Street Schoolhouse, and the Charles Ives Birthplace Museum (1790.)

These structures represent significant examples of architectural and cultural history. Any other structures added to the collection must likewise have sufficient provenance and architectural integrity to make them worth of preservation and interpretation.

Artifacts are historic objects acquired:

1. to furnish a historic structure
2. for exhibition, for research or both,
3. to provide documentation for the interpretation of a structure, or
4. to enhance public presentations within the Danbury Museum campus relating to the cultural history of the geographic range of interest.

This includes artifacts:

1. with provenance to Danbury, Connecticut;
2. that duplicate or closely approximate items original to the interpreted site or themes that no longer exist or are unavailable for exhibition, or

Archival materials are primary source documents, original photographic prints and negatives, original motion picture material (film and videotape), and paper ephemera. These are acquired because they document the structures and collections administered by the Danbury Museum; establish a provenance relationship to the structures and collections; or document the institutional history of the Danbury Museum. Archival materials include non-current records

or groups of records collected and preserved by an individual or organization. These include papers, files, documents, photographs and other materials created by the individual or organization that have intrinsic value. This intrinsic value arises because the records have unique physical features, artistic or aesthetic qualities, educational potential, or because they are associated with a famous person, place, event or issue. While archives are usually unpublished material, they may also include rare published matter such as maps, books, and plans that conform to material identified under the spatial and temporal ranges identified above.

Library materials, as a discrete group from archival collections, are defined as published and unpublished scholarly works, microfilms, videotapes, periodicals, individual articles and other current research materials relevant to the history of Danbury, Connecticut or the administration of the Danbury Museum itself. Current publications, published works without provenance to the structures or collections of, and photographic copy prints are among the items included here.

Economic History

Pre-historic Cultures

Danbury, Connecticut

Indigenous Subsistence

Danbury, Connecticut

Revolutionary War Supply Depot

Danbury, Connecticut

Hatting Industry

Danbury, Connecticut

Great Danbury State Fair

Danbury, Connecticut

Danbury Hospital

Danbury, Connecticut

High Tech Industries

Danbury, Connecticut

Social History

Ethnic History

group interaction and various eras of immigration

Politics

In Danbury, Connecticut, or as it relates to Danbury specifically

Education

Danbury Public Schools

Danbury Private, Trade, and Catholic Schools

Higher Education (Danbury Normal School, WCSU)

Recreation

Danbury parks

Danbury sports

Family and Domestic Life

Information, genealogy, photographs that showcase all aspects of domestic life in Danbury, Connecticut.

Religion

Arts & Culture

Decorative or performing arts at or relating to Danbury, Connecticut or are representative of the culture of Danbury. (Including Danbury Music Centre, the Great Danbury State Fair, etc.)

Celebrations

Parades, gatherings, and celebrations in Danbury, Connecticut

Military History

French activity in Danbury, King Philip's War, Rochambeau.

British activity in Danbury through 1815.

Danbury people in the Civil War.

Spanish-American War (April 25 to August 12, 1898)

as it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut

World War I

as it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut

World War II

as it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut

Korean War

as it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut

Vietnam War

as it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut

First Gulf War—Operation Desert Shield (August 7, 1990 to March 17, 1991)

As it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut.

Second Gulf War – Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 2003)

As it relates to the people of Danbury, Connecticut.

Transportation History

Land & Railroads

Cars, trains trolleys, horse-drawn carriages. Connecticut highways and roads as they impact Danbury tourism/culture/commerce.

Air

Danbury Airport

Institutional History

A merger, in 1947, between the Scott-Fanton Museum and the Danbury Historical and Arts Center, saw the creation of the Danbury Scott-Fanton Museum & Historical Society Inc. 2006 saw the merger of the Danbury Scott-Fanton Museum with the City of Danbury and a new entity was born on July 1, 2008: the Danbury Museum & Historical Society Authority.

Collections Plans

A. Collections Management Policy

The Danbury Museum collects the material culture of the people of Danbury, Connecticut, and preserves it in the public trust for the benefit of present and future generations. We look for objects, ordinary and extraordinary, whose stories and meanings are rich and complex, have inherent worth, both reflect and challenge the conventional wisdom, and invite us to look deeper or broader. These objects and their documented contexts illuminate and interpret the larger themes of our history. Our collections form the foundation for research, scholarship, exhibition, public programs and outreach. (Note separate Danbury Museum Collections Management Policy.)

B. General Statements

1. The role of objects is to serve as a form of evidence of the past, along with document and visual records.

2. Objects have many meanings, and, over time, knowledge about the objects and the interpretations of the past will change
3. The Museum's collecting will be guided simultaneously by current themes for exhibition and public programs and by the larger goal of a comprehensive historic collection that tells the story of Danbury, Connecticut.

C. Intellectual Principles for Future Collecting

1. The Museum's collections should reflect the breadth, depth, and complexity of the experiences of the people of Danbury. The Museum actively seeks items to illuminate under-represented stories and groups.
2. Museum staff will continue to re-examine collections in response to new scholarship and changing interpretations.
3. Museum staff considers it of the utmost importance that we strive to conserve and preserve our objects to the best of our abilities and resources. However, as a small museum, both our staff and financial resources are limited. As such, careful consideration shall be given toward objects that may stretch our resources. Objects that require extreme conservation, or are in a state of disrepair or neglect, will be weighed very carefully prior to acquisition. Only those objects whose benefits to our mission (such as those of great cultural, artistic, or historic significance) outweigh the burden of their care, shall be considered for Acquisition.
4. In acquiring objects, Museum staff will pay as much attention to intellectual matters (relevance, context, significance, and provenance) as to the procedures of collecting (registration, conservation, and shipping).
5. Only objects that are deemed to be authentic shall be accessioned into the Museum's permanent collections. Reproductions, duplicates, or forgeries will be

added to the Education Collection or the Exhibit Property Collection (under clearly defined circumstances), or not accepted at all.

6. In terms of cataloging, the intellectual content will be documented in an accessible manner in so much as is possible. Research tools and documentary techniques (oral/video history, documents, photographs) will be employed to provide context for the Museum's acquisitions whenever possible.

7. During the acquisition process, the Museum staff will endeavor to garner as much supporting documentation as possible for the objects being considered. In order to support our mission, our goal is to learn the provenance, history, anecdotes, biographies and any other factual (or mythical) information related to the artifacts. The richer the documentation for an artifact, the more relevant it becomes to our collecting priorities.

8. The Danbury Museum will adhere to the letter and spirit of accepted ethical standards and principles and policies adopted by the museum and its governing body.

9. The Danbury Museum will comply with The Museum Disposition of Property Act (passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2012 as Bill 5355 LCO 1663) with respect to the disposition of property loaned to the Danbury Museum. (see the full content of the bill: [An Act Concerning Museum Property](#) .

D. Collecting Priorities

The following priorities shall be utilized by responsible staff in determining what collections will be actively sought, acquired, and accessioned for the purposes of research, exhibition, and preservation. At all times they are to be informed and guided by the overall needs of the collections; the availability of similar materials; the significance of potential acquisitions to the mission-driven objectives of the Danbury Museum; the legal and ethical guidelines of the museum profession; and

the general statements, intellectual principles, and collecting themes outlined above and in the Scope of Collections Statement.

1. As a matter of first priority, the Danbury Museum shall endeavor to collect items of virtually all material types pertaining to:

- a. Charles Ives & the Ives Birthplace Museum
- b. Marian Anderson and her life in Danbury and the Marian Anderson Studio

i. Either original artifacts which will be accessioned into the primary collection,

ii. or items appropriate to the various time period interpreted which will be added to either the Education Collection of the Exhibit Property Collection.

2. Of secondary priority to the collecting activities of the Danbury Museum shall be the acquisition of items pertaining directly to the general history of Danbury, Connecticut.

3. Of tertiary priority to the collecting activities of the Museum shall be the acquisition of items which serve to emphasize the broader regional and national themes and stories which bear a direct connection to the history of Danbury, Connecticut.

E. Recommendations for Future Collecting Activities

The Danbury Museum will endeavor to collect those items that will round-out the collection categories outlined above, namely:

1. any items that enhance the interpretation of the Marian Anderson Studio
2. Any items that directly relate to Charles Ives and his time in Danbury
3. items, either original or reproduction pertaining to the Native American presence in Danbury, Connecticut.
4. items that relate to domestic life of the 20th and 21st centuries, with very careful attention given to the limitations of space and resources of the museum.

F. Collection Strengths

1. Danbury in the Revolutionary War
2. Hatting industry in Danbury and US
3. Great Danbury Fair 1946-1981
4. Genealogical and family history
5. Charles Ives
6. Marian Anderson
7. World War I materials and primary sources
8. Photographs

Resources used:

–Guidelines for Writing a Scope of Collections Statement. California State Parks: Archaeology, History & Museums Div. Museum Services Section, March 2009

–Scope of Collections. Mackinac State Historic Parks, Mackinac Island Michigan

–Scope of Collections Statement and Collection Plan, The Historical Society of Cheboygan County, Inc.