



Donating Artifacts to the Baltimore Museum of Industry

**Thank you for your interest in the BMI
and considering the museum as a repository for your possessions.**

The following information provides guidelines for donating objects and archival materials to the BMI as outlined in our collecting policy, and in accordance with our museum's mission statement. We are happy to discuss your donation offer or answer any questions you may have.

Collections Staff

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The mission of the Baltimore Museum of Industry is to collect, preserve, and interpret the industrial and technological heritage of the Baltimore region for the public by presenting educational programs and exhibitions that explore the stories of Maryland's industries and the people who created and worked in them.

To help achieve this vision and mission, the BMI shall collect, research, preserve, exhibit, and interpret artifacts in accordance with the collections policy. We celebrate past, present, and future innovations of Maryland industry and its people through dynamic educational experiences representing People, Place, and Product.

General Information

Appraisals

Appraisal of your donation offer can happen at any time prior to, during, or after the donation process. The BMI cannot provide monetary valuations to donors, but we are happy to work with the appraiser of your choice.

Condition

All donations to the museum must be clean and free of dirt, dust, grime, insects, cobwebs, etc. Offers received otherwise will be declined. Our rule of thumb is, if your artifacts are not in a condition that you would display the objects in your living room, then they are not in a condition we can display or store in the museum! The museum does not employ conservation staff to address artifacts in need of cleaning or conservation

What We Can and Can't Accept

The BMI is pleased to consider any offered artifact that falls within our collecting criteria; however, our storage space is limited and there are legal and ethical considerations associated with each donation. These considerations vary somewhat depending on the type of artifact in question, but in general we collect objects that relate to, or are descriptive of, the industrial history of the region.

Please contact us for more details, but here are a few important points:

- Object donations must be made by the object's legal owner.
- We do not collect industries not represented in Maryland.
- Historical artifacts with documented histories, including who used it, where and when it was used, are preferred over those with an unknown background. In general, the more information you have about your object, the better!
- It is preferred that objects be whole (no missing parts), in their original condition, in working condition if possible, with manuals or other documentation, clean, and in generally stable condition at the time of donation. Exceptions can sometimes be made for an object that is potentially fragile, as long as prior notice is given to the staff. Please talk with us before undertaking a major cleaning project.

The museum has two collections—a Permanent Collection and a Teaching Collection.

Permanent Collection

This collection consists of artifacts (objects, photographs, archives, and library) which directly relate to the purpose or mission of the museum. Artifacts accepted into the permanent collection are documented, preserved, and managed according to prescribed methods meeting current professional standards.

The Permanent Collection represents:

- Artifacts made by a Maryland industry and/or prominent vendor for use in Maryland or elsewhere;
- Artifacts representing a Maryland industry and/or vendor--such as the film, brewing, glass, or steel industry or vendors such as Goetze, Esskay, or Noxzema;

- Industries that are indigenous and/or significant to Maryland, such as iron forges, quarries, the Port, maritime, and waterman industries (oysters, crabbing, etc.);
- Anything pertaining to the Platt and Company cannery and history of our building.

Teaching Collection

This collection consists of objects that are duplicated in the permanent collection; are reproductions or props used in exhibits; do not directly relate to the purpose of the museum or are of lesser significance, but which can still be valuable educational tools.

You may ask to have your donation placed in either the Permanent or Teaching Collection. The Permanent Collection is controlled by museum staff and requires special considerations and permissions for use. This helps ensure that your gift will be preserved as long as possible. The Teaching Collection is actively used and more frequently in the public eye, but will eventually wear out and be disposed of.

The Donation Process

Donating your object to the museum involves several steps. Should we choose to not accept your donation at any point in this process, we will return your object to you, unless otherwise instructed, and may be able to help you find another appropriate repository.

1. The best method to begin the process is to email as much information about your gift offer to the department, along with photographs. Be sure to include your contact information. Staff may request more information. Please use the "Object Provenance" list below to guide you.
2. Your offer will first be discussed with the curator or archivist of the discipline represented. The curator may accept the object for consideration by committee, or decide that it is inappropriate for our collections. If your item is approved for consideration, a temporary receipt for the artifact will be issued to you upon arrival of the artifact to the museum. While your artifact is in our hands, we will take the utmost care of it.

After the curator's acceptance, all donations to the Permanent Collection require committee approval; this committee generally meets quarterly. Donations to the Teaching Collection require approval of the Education Department, but do not require committee approval.

3. Upon committee approval, a Gift Agreement, which is the document that transfers legal ownership of the object from you to us, will be executed. Once we receive the signed Gift Agreement, your object becomes part of our collections, to be incorporated into our programs, exhibits, research center, storage, or activities accordingly.

The gift agreement reads as follows:

I am the legal owner of the personal property described below and desire to give said personal property to the Museum. I do hereby irrevocably and unconditionally give and transfer to the Museum all right, title, and interest, including all copyright, trademark, and related interests, in and to the following described property. During processing, materials found that are not within the mission and collection policy will not be accepted and disposed of according to donor instructions spelled out in the Temporary Custody Receipt or, in the absence of such instructions, as the Collections Department sees fit. Such conditions would be for materials found in extremely poor physical condition; restricted or private information; or a preponderance of published items, duplicative materials, or obsolete formats. These donations will be subject to disposal or used for research, pop or education collection unless otherwise instructed by donor.

4. Credit Line and Restrictions

You may specify a “credit line” that will become part of the label should your donation be exhibited. Please talk with us if you are interested in specific wording or if your gift is in memory of someone. If not otherwise specified, the credit line for your donation will read “Gift of [your name]”. You may also request that your gift be anonymous; if so, you will not be identified to the public, but in order for your gift to be legal we must have on file a signed gift agreement with your contact information.

It is museum policy to not accept gifts with restrictions, meaning that once the object is legally ours, we want 100 percent control of its use. Any limitations or restrictions to this policy must be discussed and agreed to by both parties prior to signing the gift agreement.

Please note that:

- Restrictions may not be placed by donors or their heirs subsequent to signing a gift agreement or other legal gift document.
- Restrictions cannot be placed on donations to the Teaching Collection.
- We cannot guarantee that any object or group of objects will be exhibited or actively researched, cannot place any object on permanent exhibit, and cannot loan objects back to donors or their families.

Object Provenance

In order to fully interpret an artifact, we need to glean as much information about it as possible. Your story and the story of the artifact are important to us and a vital aspect of considering your offer for our collection. Answers to the following questions will provide information about provenance and whether your offer fits within our collecting parameters.

For us to consider your offer, please be able to complete the following items:

- ❖ Name of Object
Maker
Date/Age of Object
Overall Size (H" x W" x D")
- ❖ Is/was the maker of your object based in or operating in Maryland?
- ❖ Who was the original owner (name and relationship to you, if any)?
Dates of original owner?
When and where did they acquire it?
- ❖ Was the object used in your business or a Maryland-based industry?
If yes, provide details.
- ❖ When did you acquire it?
How and where did you acquire it?
- ❖ How was it used?
Is it still working?
- ❖ Has it been altered in any way?
- ❖ Do you have any photographs showing where and how it was used?
- ❖ What industry/company does this object represent?
- ❖ Can you supply any supporting documentation (instructions, company records, photographs, letters, etc.)?
- ❖ Is the donated material ready for display, i.e. stable, clean, free of insects, etc.?
- ❖ Can you deliver your donation?

Once again, thank you for your interest in the Baltimore Museum of Industry. As extensive as our collections are, they were built primarily through donations such as yours. We greatly appreciate your contribution to the history and understanding of our region.