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The Westchester County Veterans Museum at Lasdon Park Collection Management Plan

The Westchester County Veterans Museum at Lasdon Park is one of 50 facilities and parks that comprise the 18,000 acres Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. The department was established in 1960 by county charter Sec. 134.01 (see Appendix 1).

Working with Veterans, Chapter 49 of the Vietnam Veterans of America and the county's Veterans Service Agency, the Westchester County Veterans Museum opened in a former caretaker's cottage in May 1998 at Lasdon Park.

Lasdon Park is the former estate of the Voislowsky and the Lasdon family. It was acquired by the county of Westchester in Dec. 1985 and developed into an arboretum and Veteran's Memorial by the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. The Veteran's Memorial features a trail of honor with memorials and monuments honoring veterans from Westchester County and the USA. There are sculptured heads representing soldiers from the American Revolution to the present day.

The Veterans Museum, which was refurbished in 2013 and 2018, features one large room for rotating exhibits, one small room for a display of military helmets from the permanent collection and a second room with a loan display of service medals. (See Appendix 2 – Floorplan).

There are plans in the future to expand the building. The expansion will include increased exhibition space, a classroom/program room, and conservation storage area.

A. MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

1. Vision Statement

That we never forget those who served.

2. Mission Statement

The purpose of the Westchester County Veterans Museum is to tell the story of the hardships and self-sacrifice of Westchester residents who answered their country's call to duty in time of need, from the Revolutionary War to the present.

B. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This document sets forth the guidelines and procedures for the acquisition, care, preservation, public access and deaccessioning of objects in the collection. This policy will ensure that the

objects in the collection are preserved, accessed and cared for in perpetuity through the highest professional, legal and ethical standards. In addition, it ensures that the governing authority, staff and public have an opportunity to learn about the policies and the standards for collection stewardship.

This policy is reviewed once a year by the curators and updated as needed.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBIITY FOR COLLECTION CARE

Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation operates under the umbrella of Westchester County which has other departments such as Risk Management, Planning and Emergency Management that work with the parks department to guide collection care.

The parks department is guided by a Parks Commissioner. A Deputy Parks Commissioner oversees the Conservation division. Lasdon and the Veterans Museum are operated under the Conservation Division which is overseen by a Conservation Director. The Conservation Director reports directly to the Deputy Parks Commissioner. A park manager supervises operations at Ladson and the museum and reports to the Conservation Director. (See Appendix 3 – Org. charts)

1. Parks Commissioner

The Parks Commissioner, who is appointed by a County Executive, has the ultimate responsibility for the collections in the Veterans Museum.

2. Deputy Parks Commissioner

A Deputy Parks Commissioner selected by the Parks Commissioner, acts as a representative of the Parks Commissioner and oversees the Conservation division.

3. Conservation Director

The Conservation Director is responsible for overseeing operations at Lasdon and the Veterans Museum to ensure that collection related matters are attended to and handled in a timely manner.

4. Park Manager

The Park Manager is responsible for the day to day operation of Lasdon and the Veterans Museum.

5. Curators

At the Veterans Museum, a full-time curator and part-time military curator are responsible for the daily operation, collections management, curatorial research, educational programming, disaster planning and housekeeping.

The curators can recommend acquisitions for the collection and deaccessions in consultation with the Park Manager who will relay the pertinent information through the Parks Commissioner for appropriate action.

D. THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

The permanent collection is comprised of military clothing, medals, weaponry and related memorabilia. A selection of historic military helmets, weaponry and a model with related material about the USS Westchester are on permanent display at the museum.

1. The Collecting Plan

The Veterans Museum specifically collects military material and memorabilia about servicemen and woman who have a connection to Westchester County and who have had military service from the Revolutionary War to the present.

Collection objects from outside Westchester County will only be considered if they are exceptionally unique, rare, and educational and can enhance the mission.

2. Immediate Collection Goals

The immediate collection management goals at the Veterans Museum are:

- A. Apply standard museum numbering system and create an accession sheet for each object.
- B. Begin cataloguing the collection.
- C. Deaccession items that are not relevant to the mission or collecting plan.
- D. Work on upgrading conservation storage of the collection and related records.
- E. Digitally photograph every collection object.
- F. Begin growing the collection by contacting WW II Veterans in Westchester County.

E. MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

The curators are responsible for the care, processing and conservation of the collection. The staff endeavors to keep abreast of regulations that have an impact on collection management.

1. Deed of Gift

A Deed of Gift form will be filled out for all donations. Gifts will not be accepted that have any restrictions attached to them, or that are not relevant to the mission of the Veterans Museum. Exceptions can be made in consultation with the curators, park manager through the director to the Parks Commissioner. (See Appendix 4- Deed of Gift Form). Donors will also be given a form to fill out to establish the connection between the gift(s), donor and the mission. (See Appendix 5-Collections Donation Information Form).

2. Acquisitions

The acquisition of objects will expand and refine the mission of the Veterans Museum. Objects can be acquired as gifts, donations, purchases, bequests, exchanges, field collections, trade or transfers. No matter what the method, all acquisitions for the Veterans Museum become property of Westchester County with placement at Lasdon Park. No one within the county or outside groups has the authority to suggest placement at another site if the acquisition is specific to the Veterans Museum.

The Parks Department's Administrative Manual Section 201 details the acceptance of gifts (Appendix 6 & 6A – Section 201 Acceptance of Gifts and County Deed of Gift).

A. Guidelines

1. The owner must have clear title and must sign a Deed of Gift form transferring title to the County of Westchester. In the case of a bequest, the donor must also have clear title.
2. Deed of Gift forms and other documents (or copies if multiple objects) transferring ownership to the county will be kept on file at Lasdon for each object.
3. Acquisition by purchase shall be decided upon by the recommendation of the Curators in consultation with the Park Manager and any other pertinent parks administrators.
4. No acquisition shall be appraised by the staff of the Veterans Museum, Lasdon Park, or the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. (U.S. Tax Reform Act of 1984)
5. The Veterans Museum must be capable of housing and caring for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted professional principals and standards.

6. Acquisitions valued of \$100 must be approved by the County Board of Legislators. Board approval require a Legislation Submission Sheet, Fiscal Impact Sheet and Capital Impact Sheet (Appendix 7 – Board approval submission material).

7. Only objects that can be used within the museum building will be collected.

B. Criteria for Evaluating Acquisitions

1. Strong preference will be given to objects that support the mission statement.

2. An object in good condition is preferred over one that is in poor condition unless it is unique or significant or fills a gap.

3. Ownership and provenance shall be verified. The Veterans Museum will never accept any object were legal ownership is not substantiated.

4. The ability to care for and preserve the object must be weighed against storage options and the needs of the existing collections.

3. Registration

The purpose of the registration process is to preserve the association the objects may have, to aid in the interpretation of the object may have, and to provide a way to be accountable for each object.

Objects accepted for accession will be registered in accordance to the accepted museum process as found in Dudley and Wilkinson's *Museum Registration Methods* and by using *The Past Perfect* computer program. The curators are responsible for this.

4. Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning is the process of removing an object from the collection.

A. Deaccessioning Criteria

An object may be deaccessioned from the permanent collection in consultation with the Park Manager and any other pertinent parks administrator based on any of the following criteria:

1. The object is no longer relevant to the mission.

2. The object is being replaced by a more representative example.

3. An object has deteriorated beyond the reasonable expectations of

preservation.

4. Duplicate objects can longer be care for.

5. The object is lost or stolen.

B. Disposal

If an object has to be deaccession, the following methods may be applied to the disposal:

1. Make a good faith effort to find the donor and return the donation.

2. Gift or trade the object to another public or not-for-profit agency.

3. Sell the object through the county auction system

C. Deaccessioning Policies and Procedures

1. Money received from deaccessioning will go to the Friends of Lasdon Veterans Fund.

2. Any object deaccessioned will be flagged on the computer along with any other records that indicate the object has left the collection.

3. No donated material shall be deaccessioned for two years after the date of its acquisition (US Tax Reform Act of 1984).

4. Deaccessioned objects shall never be given to staff or sold privately.

5. Objects are deaccessioned from the permanent collection only.

5. Non-accessioned Material

Any object deemed not collection-or deaccession worthy may comprise the non-accessioned collection. It may be used for educational purposes. It is expendable. Appropriate records will be kept to document history and use.

6. Appraisals

The staff of the Veterans Museum, Lasdon Park and Westchester County do not provide appraisals for any object.

F. LOANS

The purpose of a loan is to enhance the mission of the Veterans Museum. Loans from the Veterans Museum will extend to the Veterans Museum's purpose outside the walls and give the collections credibility in the field. Loans to the Veterans Museum will augment the mission. The curators, in conjunction with the park manager recommends a loan to or from the Veterans Museum and the Park Commissioner ultimately signs off on it.

1. The Veterans Museum will enter into a loan agreement with the following stipulations:

A. Under a year loan or less than \$30,000 value:

If the incoming or outgoing loan is for a period under a year and involves a county value of \$30,000 or less, the loan has to go through the "Short term loan process" before the loan can be signed by the Commissioner.

B. Over a year or more than \$30,000 value:

If the period of the loan is for more than a year and the value of the object is \$30,000 or more, the loan has to go through the "Acquisition and Contract" process for approval. Once approved, a copy of the loan form and the insurance certificate has to be submitted to Risk Management before the Commissioner can sign the loan form. The \$30,000 cost can include one item, or a group of items, but it has to be from one loan source. Each different loan source also requires a separate "Acquisition and Contract" if over a year and/or \$30,000 or more in cost.

2. Incoming Loans

A. Documentation

Incoming loan forms will be used to document the loan (Appendix 8 – Incoming Loan Form). The term of the loan will be one year and can be renewed. Loans will only be accepted for those objects that the Veterans Museum can care for under the same standards as its own collection.

B. Risk Management

A loan form will also be filled out and submitted to Risk Management for loans to the Museum. (Appendix 9 – Risk Management Insurance Form) The form must contain a value supplied by the loaner. In case of a claim, the loaner may have to prove the value of the object.

3. Outgoing Loans

The Veterans Museum will lend objects for exhibitions to other museums. Loan agreements must cover:

- A. The duration of the loan
- B. Copyright questions
- C. Requirements for security
- D. Requirements for transportation
- E. Care of the item during the loan
- F. Requirements for insurance

4. Inter-departmental and Inter-County Loans

Loans to and from nature centers, other park divisions and the divisions within the county can be arranged with the curators, park manager, conservation director and other related parties. Loan forms will be signed to document the loan. Transportation will be worked out amongst the curator and loan parties. Loans shall be no longer than a year with an option to renew.

5. Courier Policy

Bonded couriers will be hired by the County of Westchester to transport any objects for loans other than inter-departmental or inter-county loans.

G. DOCUMENTATION

The curators are responsible for maintaining complete and up-to-date records on all objects.

1. *Past Perfect*

The computer registration program Past Perfect will be used to create all necessary collection management forms and records. The program will be backed up at regular intervals.

2. Paper Records

Paper records will be stored in archival folders in a fireproof file cabinet in the museum storage room. Copies of the forms and records will be printed on acid-free paper and will be stored at the county's Record Center.

3. Digital Records

Westchester County IT backs up all digital records daily.

4. Nomenclature

The Veterans Museum will follow the system developed by Robert Chenhill, Revised *Nomenclature* (Walnut Creek, CA 1996) in classifying and cataloguing the collection. The nomenclature shall be confined to the terms used in the Veterans Museum registration process. *Nomenclature* is also built into the computer program *Past Perfect*.

5. Accessioning

Every object in the permanent collection will be numbered with a unique three-part accession number. The numbers will be kept in a running accession log book kept by the curators. Numbers will be applied to objects according to museum best practices.

6. Inventory

In order to keep accurate records and to maintain up-to-date information, a yearly inventory will be conducted. The results will be filed for future reference and to track any changes. Periodic spot-check inventories may be conducted if necessary.

7. Unclaimed Loans after 2013

The Veterans Museum as of 2013, does not accept permanent loans. All loans have a termination date that can be extended by the request of the Museum or lender and are subject to the agreement of both parties. It is the responsibility of the lender to maintain communication with the Museum and to provide updated contact information.

If the lender fails to remain in contact with the Museum and to supply relevant contact information, the Museum may clarify title to a permanent loan or loaned artifact for a specified term that has expired beginning five years from the last date the lender contacted the Museum. The Museum will utilize and abide by Section 233-aa of New York State Education Law regarding claiming title and ownership of permanent loans, expired loans or unclaimed property.

8) Unclaimed Loans before and Undocumented objects before 2013

Unclaimed loans are loans that have expired or were loaned for an indefinite term (often called “permanent loans”). Undocumented objects are objects for which the museum cannot determine the lender, donor or owner after making a good faith search to find the owner.

Many loans and objects in the Veterans Museum collection have been held unclaimed and undocumented for at least ten years. The Museum will utilize and abide by Section 233-aa of New York State Education Law regarding claiming title and ownership of unclaimed loans and undocumented objects.

H. COLLECTION CARE AND PRESERVATION

The permanent collect at the Veterans Museum is held in public trust. The staff of the museum has a responsibility to perform continual self-analysis on collection care and to take responsible actions to address short comings. The Veterans Museum shall therefore, to the best of its ability, the curators will:

1. Provide a stable environment to protect objects on display and in storage from excessive light, heat, humidity and dust.
2. Train museum and Lasdon staff in the care and handling of objects.
3. Photocopy paper material when possible on acid-free paper and store originals and copies in acid-free folders.
4. Use the advice of a trained conservator for any conservation treatments when funding permits.

I. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Veterans Museum building is protected from theft and fire by an alarm system. The storage room in the Main House is protected from fire by an alarm system. In addition, a PIP report (Pride in Parks) assessment is taken at least once a year which identifies any hazards or risks.

1. Insurance

The County of Westchester is self-insured. Lasdon Park pays a yearly insurance premium for a comprehensive policy covering the buildings, the contents and liabilities to the public and volunteers. The insurance value of the permanent collection of the Veterans Museum is based on an appraisal conducted by a professional and is periodically updated to keep the values current. A copy of the appraisal with photographs is submitted to Risk Management.

2. Security

The museum building is only open when it can be attended by a curator. It has a security alarm system.

The permanent collection is stored in the Main House in a locked room. The house has limited public access.

J. ACCESS POINTS

Access points are ways the general public and researchers use the museum and collection. Every effort will be made to provide access while ensuring the safety and preservation of the collection.

1. The Veterans Museum

The Veterans Museum is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm May through December. January to April, the museum is open on weekends from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm. Staff will also open the museum when requested by interested visitors.

2. Researchers

A. Inventories, relevant files and a staff member will be available only to users by reservation. A donation to the Friends of Lasdon Veterans Fund will be requested.

B. Fragile or valuable material may be limited in use.

C. Hours of access are by designated hours or by appointment.

D. Researchers will be required to sign-in.

3. Reproducing Material

A. Reproduction of material by the staff of The Veterans Museum does not transfers either copyright or property rights, nor does it constitute permission to publish or display material.

B. The museum shall inform and educate applicable staff concerning the principles of Fair-Use and the four factors contained in *17 U.S.C. Section 107*, and legal decisions relating thereto, which state that copyright materials may be used or reproduced under special circumstances that constitute fair use. These factors are as follows:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes.
2. The nature of the copyrighted work.
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole.
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

C. Copying of material may be denied if the material is fragile or weak.

4. Photography

A. In the museum, personal photos are allowed of the exhibits. However, photographing the collection does not imply permission to reproduce or publish such material, although these rights may be assigned in writing.

B. Commercial photography is by permit from the Park Manager or the parks permit office with fees attached. Westchester County retains all rights to publications or reproductions in any media of all photographic images in the collection.

5. Exhibitions and Public Programs

All exhibitions at the Veterans Museum shall be part of a planned, systematic program of permanent and temporary exhibitions thematically relevant to the goals and purposes of the Veterans Museum. Permanent exhibitions are defined as those having a life of at least five years. Temporary exhibitions have a life determined by scale, location, content, source, and preservation concerns.

The museum currently plans two themed exhibitions a year which are supported by public programs such as a specific lecture or a weekend military show. For the exhibitions, loan objects are used along with collection objects. Public programming supports the mission of the museum.

K. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was approved on June 20, 2020 and shall be effective immediately. This policy supersedes any previous policies. It has been revised on June 10, 2022.

APPENDIXES

1. County Charter Sec. 134.01
2. Museum Floor Plan
3. Organizational Charts
 - A. Westchester County
 - B. Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation
4. Deed of Gift Form for the Veterans Museum
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APPENDIX 10: Closure of the Veterans Museum

In July 2022, a comprehensive rehabilitation of the Lasdon Main House began. As part of the rehabilitation, the house had to be completely emptied of objects and staff as well. Since the staff had to be relocated, the Veterans Museum was chosen as a place to house staff. In order to accommodate the staff, the museum was emptied of its permanent and rotating collections. The permanent collection was packed using the best practices possible and stored in a room that was retro-fitted in the maintenance garage to hold the collections. Loaned objects were returned. The Westchester County display remained on display.

To meet the need of visitors who were disappointed that the museum was closed, a “pop-up” museum exhibit was developed and set up in the former giftshop which was also serving as an office and visitors center. The first exhibit featured helmets from World War II.

Additionally, an idea to present a regular web-based program called “Marks in History” was researched and developed. Programs would run about 3 minutes max and focus on the story of a particular object such as the uniform of the American Womens Volunteer Service which is the same uniform Betty White wore. Other topics included the 1812 Mortar ball, Ike jackets, and the Picklehaub. It has yet to air.

When the rehabilitation of the Main House is completed, the staff will be moving back to the house around late August 2022. The museum will be returned to full operation with the restoration of the permanent collections and continuation of development of rotating exhibits.

While the museum was closed, donations continued to be accepted, accessioned and catalogued.

