

NSDAR Americana Collection—Collection Development Policy

This policy is intended to provide guidance to both NSDAR archivists and potential donors regarding the development and management of the Americana Collection.

History, Purpose and Use:

The concept of an Americana Collection intended to house manuscripts and imprints pertaining to the history of Colonial America, the Revolutionary War period and the Early National period emerged at the time of the commemoration of the DAR's 50th anniversary in 1940. No formal collection of such material existed at the National Society prior to that time; rather, documents were dispersed among the holdings of the DAR Library and the DAR Museum.

The original intent of the archivists who founded the Americana Collection was to collect diaries, letters and other items concerning the lives of "ordinary" Americans up to 1830. The collection is also home to household inventories, samples of colonial-era currency, court records, birth and marriage records, land deeds and grants and military documents. Today the collection contains more than 4,000 accessions.

The Americana Collection is intended for research use both by DAR members and staff and the general public including students. The collection is open for research purposes to anyone who agrees to comply with both building security requirements and proper handling techniques for collections. All non-DAR users must agree to pay any photocopying costs associated with their use of the collection. NSDAR staff members also use the collection for exhibit purposes and outreach activities. Collection materials are not loaned to individuals or institutions without the express written permission of the NSDAR Executive Committee.

Collecting Priorities and Limitations:

Collecting emphasis is placed on acquiring original historical records including material that reveals the political, economic, geographic, intellectual, familial or cultural development of the American people to 1830. Materials of interest include but are not limited to:

- Census records;
- Church records, including marriage, baptismal and death records, bible and cemetery records;
- Accounts of the proceedings of legislatures, town meetings, societies, and clubs;
- Autobiographies, diaries and journals;
- Correspondence;
- Notebooks containing medical, botanical, geological, geographical, astronomical and culinary references;
- Maps of American communities, states, colonies, and large geographical areas;
- Records of early American schools;
- Records of early American business enterprises, account books, bills, etc.;

- Documents of the American Revolution, especially commissions, general orders, accounts of troop movements, military and naval supplies, sworn depositions of applicants for pensions, and material of like character;
- Deeds (indentures), wills, land grants and other legal documents;
- American currency issued by the colonies;
- Printed material including books, pamphlets, posters, newspapers etc., printed during the Colonial, Revolutionary and Early National periods.

Submission and Retention of Historical Materials:

Potential donations must be pre-approved by the Office of the Historian General regardless of how closely they conform to the above-stated criteria. The approval of the President General or Historian General is required if donors wish to contribute items that fall outside the conditions of this policy. Please do not submit materials for the collection without first speaking to a NSDAR archivist. Submitted materials that do not conform to this policy may be returned to the donor or deposited elsewhere at NSDAR.

All donations accepted for the Americana Collection are the permanent property of the National Society and must be presented as outright gifts. Materials occasionally may be deaccessioned in order to maintain and improve the quality of the collection. Materials considered for deaccessioning may include items that do not meet the criteria outlined in this policy. The approval of the NSDAR Executive Board is required before an item may be deaccessioned.

Any available information concerning the provenance of donated items should accompany the donation. It is requested that donors do not attempt to repair documents before offering them to the National Society as inexperienced repair work often causes irreparable damage to historical materials.

This policy is subject to change without notice.

Contact the Office of the Historian General by telephone: (202) 879-3256 or email: historian@dar.org.