



City of Arts & Innovation

Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: JULY 23, 2025**

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DEACCESSION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION, WHERE APPLICABLE, OF FOUR (4) OBJECTS: A TABLE (O271), TWO CHAIRS (A500-83; UNKNOWN ACCESSION NUMBER), AND A LAMP (RMA 8)

ISSUE:

To recommend to City Council to approve deaccession from the permanent collection, where applicable, of four (4) objects: a table (O271), two chairs (A500-83; unknown accession number), and a lamp (RMA 8).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that City Council approves deaccession from the permanent collection, where applicable, of four (4) objects: a table (O271), two chairs (A500-83; unknown accession number), and a lamp (RMA 8).

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting on December 14, 2022, the Museum of Riverside's (Museum) Collection Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum of Riverside Board forward the recommendation regarding the four (4) named furnishings to City Council, pending a search to ascertain the accession status of them all.

In the 1970s, a committed volunteer group, which eventually became the Riverside Museum Associates, worked successfully to save a Queen Anne Victorian house at 8193 Magnolia Avenue. Ownership of the house was transferred to the City of Riverside under an agreement that remains current today. This house and its grounds operate today as Heritage House.

Since the house was donated to the City with the goal of operating it as a historic house museum, furnishings have been acquired over half a century to enrich the period-appropriate character of the house. Over time, decisions about the acquisition of these furnishings were not always made as current collection management standards require, nor were complete records always created or maintained. Staff surmise that records simply may not have been created at all for objects acquired for use rather than preservation/exhibit. Accession records have not been located for all four (4) of the objects that are the subject of this report.

DISCUSSION:

The term “deaccession” refers to the procedure of formally removing an object from a museum’s permanent collection, after which the object may be considered for sale, exchange, gift, transfer to another entity, transfer to a collection other than the permanent collection, or – in the case of irretrievably deteriorated objects – disposal.

The operation of a historic house museum must balance the public’s desire to see and experience as much as possible with the collection management mandate to preserve and protect material culture. Enhancement of the visitor experience often includes costumed guides and availability of some hands-on artifacts. Further enhancements may include period furnishings that staff can use for daily needs. Use of permanent collection objects, however, is generally prohibited in order to improve preservation efforts. To resolve this conflict, historic objects that are not part of the permanent collection or have been deaccessioned from the permanent collection can be designated for daily use.

The recommendation is that the objects remain in Heritage House contributing to the historic atmosphere, but that their status change from permanent collection to Community Collection. The Museum of Riverside’s Community Collection is a level of the Museum’s collections that permits a less stringent standard of care. Community Collection objects may be included in community mini-exhibitions where environmental or security standards are more relaxed. In the case of the current recommendation, the status change would permit the four objects to continue to be used by docents as they serve the public without the Museum being obligated to devote the degree of preservation and documentation care to them that is required of permanent collection objects, and without the Museum being out of compliance with accepted standards of care required of permanent collection objects. These objects are currently in use by docents and volunteers at the public entrance to the house.

The desk was found in the collections in 1977 and eventually installed as the front desk for public use at Heritage House. Under the shelf is a label with the following in pencil: “Geo. F. Mott, Riverside, CA.” The desk was made in Michigan by Charlotte Mfg. Co. George Fox Mott (1869-1932) owned a furniture store on Main Street by at least 1904 and sold the store in 1916. The furniture store is currently the Imperial Hardware Lofts. There is currently no information on who owned this piece of furniture or where it was housed.

The circa 1890s wooden side chair (A500-83) was purchased by the Riverside Museum Associates and donated to the Museum in the 1970s. The records state, “purchase was made possible by donation for specific item: Mrs. Hal Eugene Kelly, 2170 Fielding Road, Riverside, CA for: A memorial to her husband, Hal Kelly, who is living at present. Purchased from “Old City Hall” Antiques Shops in 1977.” This item, thus, lacks a strong provenance or compelling Riverside-based story.

Because full documentation has not yet been located for all four of these objects, this recommendation is made proactively to ensure that the objects are transferred to an appropriate status. The decision to deaccession, if approved, will be added to the records when and if they’re located. If it is ascertained that one or more of the objects was never accessioned, the outcome of this recommendation will nevertheless become part of the object files.

The four objects fit one key deaccession criterion within the Museum's Collections Management and Exhibition Policies:

1. The object/specimen was accessioned inappropriately.

Understanding that the intent was likely always that these items would serve as the admissions desk and staff seating at Heritage House, any of them that were accessioned should not have been accessioned. Further, as of the date of the preparation of this report, these objects lack documentation and historic data that tie them to the Museum's Riverside-based mission. It is likely that they were chosen only because they were compatible with the Victorian atmosphere of Heritage House.

If this deaccession action is approved by City Council, the objects will remain where they are, used by the docents and volunteers who staff the house, and the records will reflect their change of status.



Library table, ca. 1900
O271
Manufactured by Charlotte Mfg. Co.,
Michigan
Oak; single drawer; lower shelf; reeded
legs with onion-like shape at the top



English side chair, ca. 1880
A500-83
Wood; turned legs; carved back
splat



Ladder-back side chair, ca. 1865
Unnumbered or unknown
accession number
Wood; cabriole legs; vase back-
splat; upholstered seat



Lamp, ca.1880
RMA 8
Cast metal: woman's head in several shades of
gold on a black base; originally kerosene oil lamp;
silk covered shade

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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