



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: JULY 22, 2026**

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: RECOMMEND DEACCESSION FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF ONE (1) WASHING MACHINE (A500-219), ONE (1) CLOTHES WRINGER (A500-192), ONE (1) WASHBOARD (A1361-1), ONE (1) LAUNDRY BOILER (A500-197 A, B), ONE (1) LAUNDRY AGITATOR (A964-33), TWENTY-FOUR (24) CLOTHESPINS (A500-187), AND ONE (1) PIE SAFE (A500-188)

ISSUE:

To recommend to City Council to approve deaccession from the permanent collection of one (1) washing machine (A500-219), one (1) clothes wringer (A500-192), one (1) washboard (A1361-1), one (1) laundry boiler (A500-197 A, B), one (1) laundry agitator (A964-33), twenty-four (24) clothespins (A500-187), and one (1) pie safe (A500-188).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that City Council approves deaccession from the permanent collection of one (1) washing machine (A500-219), one (1) clothes wringer (A500-192), one (1) washboard (A1361-1), one (1) laundry boiler (A500-197 A, B), one (1) laundry agitator (A964-33), twenty-four (24) clothespins (A500-187), and one (1) pie safe (A500-188).

BACKGROUND:

These objects all date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and represent tools and appliances available for use in a Victorian home. Each of them has been exhibited on the back porch of Heritage House (A500-219 washing machine) or moved from the Heritage House kitchen to the back porch during open hours.

While documentation supporting the following was not available until recently, objects with numbers beginning with A500 were acquired by the Riverside Museum Associates and donated to the Museum with the intent of being exhibited and potentially handled at Heritage House. The record for the clothespins (A500-187) states "Pins were bought to be used at HH and are not individually numbered but bear the same accession #. Some loss due to breakage or theft is expected, and individual value is negligible."

The washboard (A1361-1) was donated by Mrs. Dorothy Knopf. She included a note stating that the donation was motivated by the need for one to be exhibited on the Heritage House porch with the other laundry tools. The laundry agitator (A964-33) was donated by Carlos Fowler, a former Museum staff member, who also intended that the object be exhibited and handled at Heritage House. The clothes wringer (A500-192) did not have a legible number on the object, but a record search and the description make it reasonable to assume that it is A500-192.

At its meeting on May 13, 2026, the Museum's Collections Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum Board forward the deaccession recommendation regarding the Heritage House "demonstration artifacts" to City Council.

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.

To "accession" an object is the process of including it formally in a museum's permanent collection, which is the category of collection for which the greatest effort will be made to preserve the object in perpetuity and document it fully.

In the course of refining and tightening up the care and documentation of artifacts stewarded by the Museum, a baseline assumption was adopted that all artifacts that have long been exhibited in Heritage House are considered accessioned and part of the permanent collection. Records have been located that indicate that the intent was different for the artifacts that are the subject of this report. These records state that the objects were always intended to be hands-on, education-related, and demonstration objects, not subject to the preservation demands of the permanent collection. These objects have been used for more than fifteen (15) years in accordance with what is now clear to have been donor intent. While they are historic artifacts, they lack strong Riverside-based provenance that would justify permanent collection status.

If this recommendation is approved, the objects will remain in Heritage House contributing to the historic atmosphere. Deaccessioning them will permit them to continue to be used by docents without the Museum being obligated to pull them out of the compromised environment of the back porch or out of the docents' tour routine in order to devote the degree of preservation and documentation to them that is required of permanent collection objects. A new practice has been adopted of tagging hands-on artifacts to indicate clearly which may be handled.

The most appropriate course of action is that the Museum deaccession the seven (7) lots totaling thirty (30) items from the permanent collection. The items will be transferred in the records to the prop collection where they can continue their use by docents until they are too dilapidated or unsafe to continue to be useful.

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

1. The object/specimen was accessioned inappropriately.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Museum Director
Reviewed by: Ann Lovell, Manager of Operations



A964-33, Laundry agitator, early 20th century
Donated by Mr. Carlos Fowler



A1361-1, The Zinc King washboard, early 20th century
Donated by Mrs. Dorothy Knopf



A500-192, Anchor brand clothes wringer, patented 1895
Donated by the RMA



A500-197 A, B, Cream City laundry boiler, circa 1900
Donated by the RMA



A500-187, Clothespins, early 20th century
Donated by RMA purchased from Mr. Beasley's Antiques
One (1) is missing half.



A500-188, Pie safe, early 20th century
Donated by RMA purchased from Mr. Beasley's Antiques



A500-219, Boss Washing Machine, circa 1890s
Donated by the RMA