



Private Donations – Acquisition Policy

The Moravian Archives collects and preserves the records of the Moravians in North America and makes them available to the public. The bulk of our collection consists of archival records transferred to our facility from Moravian Church congregations, provincial and interprovincial agencies, and other Moravian entities. Nevertheless, we seek and encourage donations of anything that documents the history of the Moravian Church. We prefer that ownership over collections is transferred to the Archives and that researchers are given unrestricted access. If you prefer to deposit your collection as a loan or if you want certain restrictions to be applied, we can take this into consideration. The Archives is looking for all types of archival materials, including:

- correspondence relating to members, pastors, and missionaries of the Moravian Church
- specific objects and artifacts
- family histories of Moravians
- minutes of Moravian Church organizations
- photographs, illustrations, and paintings of Moravians, Moravian buildings, Moravian settlements, and mission settlements
- personal papers of Moravian ministers and missionaries
- publications including books, newspapers, magazines or pamphlets; and, any other materials generated by Moravian Church organizations and individuals in connection with their lives and activities that have historical, research or other value to warrant their permanent preservation

If you, your organization or anyone you know has any of the above described materials, please contact the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem. Archives' staff will schedule an appointment to conduct an appraisal to determine the archival value of your collection, before it is accepted by the Archives. It is very important that your papers be surveyed and appraised by a professional archivist to ensure that only those materials having historical value are collected, preserved and made available for research.

The Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, has a formal accession policy and process for all donations of archival materials. If you are considering donating materials to the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, please review the documents listed below:

- Donation Drop-Off Form
- Deed of Gift

For MAB Staff Use | Conversations with a Donor

The following points (not necessarily in this order) need to be considered when a donor makes a donation of material to the Archives:

- Is the donor the rightful and sole owner? Is the donor able to transfer ownership? For example, when two siblings jointly inherit certain papers, both have to be on the deed of gift. In this case, a single sibling cannot rightfully transfer ownership.
- Donor must be legally competent to make the gift.
- Donor must be able to comprehend the nature of the transaction and its consequences and understand the terms of the donor agreement.
- Donor must act voluntarily.
- Donor cannot expect any compensation for the gift (it would not be a gift).
- If a donor is represented by an authorized agent, or an executor of the donor's estate, documentation needs to be checked (the donor's will, power of attorney, etc.).

Additional advice from *Navigating Legal Issues in Archives* by Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt (2008), 46:

- Exercise good faith and fair dealing, avoid favoritism, remain professional, avoid the appearance of impropriety or unethical conduct, and do not profit personally from donations.
- Avoid false or misleading statements, misrepresentations, and promises that cannot be kept.
- Discuss important issues openly and honestly.
- Disclose appropriate information about the terms of the donation and transfer, including copyright, access, reformatting, deaccessioning, and disposition, and refer the donor to an attorney, accountant, or other professional, as appropriate.
- Decline to provide tax appraisals.
- Preserve the privacy of donors and third parties and the confidentiality of sensitive records, including, if appropriate, the details of the negotiations.
- Discourage unreasonable or selective restrictions on access or use.
- Document contacts with the donor.
- Put the final agreement in a written form, using a standard and approved form agreement; use a lawyer to draft or review the agreement when negotiations are complicated or difficult.
- Deliver a copy of the fully-signed agreement to the donor.
- Maintain respect for the donor, records, archives, parent institution and policies.
- Decline to compete for acquisitions or accept records that cannot be cared for.

Notes about acquisitions at the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem

Our facility preserves the records of the Moravian Church in North America, Northern Province, and these archival materials make up the bulk of our collection. The churches are responsible for transferring their records to the Moravian Archives in 10- to 20-year intervals. We direct congregations to [this web address](#) to assist the various church offices with preparing records for transfer.

Some money is also allocated in our budget for acquiring items (manuscripts, paintings, etc.) at auction; however, this only happens every so often. For example, recently I was on eBay and noticed an original [19th-century watercolor painting of a Moravian settlement](#) and was able to win the item with a \$40.00 bid. This is then paid for by the Moravian Archives. Rarely will we pay large sums for acquisitions, as we are a small NPO. The [Hamilton Fund for Book Acquisitions](#), however, allows us to purchase books and occasional manuscripts or paintings for the library and archives of the Moravian Archives.

When there is a drop-off or walk-in archival donation, we ask the donor to fill out a Collection Donation Drop-Off Form. Important on this form is the language:

- “If the Moravian Archives decides not to add the item(s) to the collection,” for which the donor has two options for a response
 - I will come to retrieve the items from the Moravian Archives
 - I allow the Moravian Archives to dispose of the items by any way it chooses

Often donors select option 2; in many cases, they do not wish to return to the Moravian Archives to collect the non-accessioned items and bring them back to their home. By selecting option 2, it allows us to dispose of or occasionally sell used books in our shop at the front desk. This is often done when we receive duplicate copies of publications in our holdings. Also, items that do not fall within the scope of the collection can be disposed of prior to accessioning.