Revisions to be made

- Acquisitions policy
- Loans
- Scope of collecting
- Maybe I need to put this off until after we get a strategic plan in place? So that we have a better idea of how we see the institution and where the collection fits into this.
- Notes from the reports.

DeBence Antique Music World Collections Policy

Mission

The Oil Region Music Preservation Museum will provide education and enjoyment for the public by sustaining, preserving, exhibiting, and demonstrating an extensive collection of mechanical music instruments and other music related items, in an environment appropriate to the age of the instruments. The Museum will serve as a "see and hear" experience for all visitors.

History

The DeBence Antique Music World began through the collection of Jake and Elizabeth DeBence. They began collecting in the forties and fifties, attending estate sales, auctions, and hunting down antiques that were being discarded. Their collection took shape in a few areas. The most impressive, and possibly most numerous, was Jake's collection of automatic musical instruments. In addition, the couple collected Tiffany-style lamps and Elizabeth collected musical toys. They eventually moved the whole collection to Franklin, Pennsylvania when they retired here in 1964. After Jake's passing in 1992 Elizabeth was looking to sell the collection but knew Jake would want it to stay local if possible. A devoted group of community members raised the necessary funds to purchase the collection and move it to its current location in downtown Franklin in 1994.

Statement of Authority

The DeBence Antique Music World collections policy was approved on 3/13/2024 by the board of directors.

Museum Stakeholders

The museum is run on a daily basis by a dedicated staff of volunteers. The volunteers are primarily responsible for giving tours, taking admission, and making gift shop sales. The museum also employs two paid staff members, one part-time and one full-time. The assistant director is a part time position that is responsible for supervising and managing the daily operations of the museum. The assistant director handles admissions, is responsible for building maintenance, and environmental monitoring. The museum director is the primary caretaker of the collection, although all museum staff are responsible for monitoring condition and reporting any noticeable signs of wear on the pieces. The director manages the collection, directs collection use, approves acquisitions and deaccessions, and is responsible for overseeing the museum's future.

The DeBence Antique Music World operates under the supervision of a board of directors. The board approves all high-level decisions, including managing the budget, handling legal inquiries, financial matters, and marketing efforts. The board is supervisory to museum staff, including the director and assistant director.

Code of Ethics

The DeBence Antique Music World aims to a high ethical standard. Museum staff and officers must at all times avoid situations that are ethically suspect or could be interpreted as ethically suspect.

This collections policy provides guidance regarding acquisition, accessioning, deaccessioning, disposal, and maintenance of the collections. It is meant to aid staff in these areas however it does not provide for every eventuality and relies on quality staff to apply the ethical principles set forth herein to any situations that the museum may encounter.

Above all the collection must never be considered a financial asset. The collection is held in public trust, to say, it is held for the benefit of the public, and we are authorized to do so by the public. The monetization of the collection jeopardizes this public trust and would negate the museum's stated mission of public service. As museums are not isolated the actions of one affect the whole and therefore the actions of the DeBence should be considered in relation to how it affects the reputation of all museums. The DeBence is a community museum, one which was begun through a community effort and which the community helps us to maintain. Therefore, any actions we take should be in the best interest of the community, and not that of the institution. The museum exists to preserve the collection, the collection does not exist to preserve the museum. With this in mind, those charged with caring for this collection must consider themselves merely custodians of these artifacts, and it is our undertaking to ensure that they live on for future generations to enjoy.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Museum collections must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal U.S. laws. As such it is essential that any donated objects are accompanied by a completed donation form to record provenance and preserve as much information as possible regarding an object. This will help prevent the illegal trafficking of artifacts and give us the best chance to avoid ethical dilemmas regarding the provenance of objects.

The museum does not collect archaeological or ethnographic materials as they are generally outside our mandate, however any pieces which could fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) should be thoroughly investigated prior to a decision to accept them into the collection. The museum does not accept donations of objects containing, or made up of, known human remains.

The museum collection frequently encounters ivory through antique musical instruments. Owing to the near-total commercial ban on ivory the museum is likely to see frequent donation of such instruments. As such museum staff must be aware of current regulations regarding ivory and other endangered animal parts. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service and the World Wildlife Federation have both produced effective guides for the identification and regulation of ivory. Current copies of these documents and other relevant legislation are kept on hand in a binder within the museum office. In general, the museum should not acquire any pieces that have ivory in them unless through donation. The museum should carefully consider the donation of any

instruments containing ivory due to the regulations regarding the sale or disposal of ivory in the event that the piece was later considered for deaccession.

In addition to ivory many musical instruments could contain other pieces of endangered species such as feathers, leather, bone, etc. Any potential additions to the collection need to be considered per the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and any other relevant regulations relating to the specific species, or type of animal part involved.

Any potential additions to the collection with Nazi-era provenance should be investigated as according to the AAM guidelines on the unlawful appropriation of objects during the Nazi era to avoid potential ethical conflicts regarding Nazi-era loot. This document is kept on file in the museum office for reference.

Scope of Collections

The collection is concentrated in a few areas, but primarily consists of mechanical musical instruments. These are musical instruments with the mechanical ability to play themselves with little to no human input. Primarily these machines consist of orchestrions, nickelodeons, player pianos, calliopes, and band organs. The museum considers musical machines to be an additional part of this area of focus. These machines are not able to be played as stand-alone musical instruments, but only exist to play a form of music through some type of media. These include phonographs, symphoniums, gramophones, record players, radios, and music boxes. As with maintaining a collection of mechanical music machines we must by necessity collect the music media which these machines play. Therefore, we have an extensive collection of records, Edison cylinders, Regina discs, piano rolls, and sheet music.

The museum also holds a significant collection of traditional musical instruments. These must be of some historic or narrative value to be considered for addition to the museum and are presented as ancillary objects. The collection of traditional musical instruments is dominated by the museum's collection of accordions and harmonicas, although many types of instruments are present, harps, mandolins, guitars, flutes, clarinets, ukeleles, dulcimers, sousaphones, trumpets, pianos, organs, drums, tambourines, etc.

Musical items are the focus of the collection. However, to support the narrative of the museum we also collect some contextual pieces such as band uniforms, furniture, historic costumes, photographs, sculptures, advertisements, artwork, etc. Elizabeth DeBence was a great collector of toys and therefore we still maintain a collection of musical toys in the museum.

'The Collection' is meant to refer to only those objects which have been accepted into the collection, accessioned, and assigned a number. These are the pieces which the museum maintains for future preservation for the benefit of the community. Pieces which are not accessioned are not considered part of the collection and therefore are not entitled to the protections set forth in this document.

Museum Collection Priorities

The museum is focused on accepting working pieces of automatic or other musical instruments. Due to the large size of many of these pieces (i.e. pianos, organs, and nickelodeons) we are simply not able to accept many objects into the collection for storage reasons and therefore are primarily focused on exceptional examples that best support the museum's mission of experiencing the music of the past. This means that ideal additions to the collection are mechanically sound or still able to be played and hold some historic value due to age, artistry, craftsmanship, technology, engineering, or other significant reason for collection. We are not engaged in active collecting but rather evaluate pieces which are offered through donations for acceptance into the collection.

Acquisitions/Accessioning

The museum accepts donations that come from members of the public. As these pieces enter the museum, they are not part of the collection, but rather are held by the museum for consideration. Objects can then be determined for inclusion in the collection, returned to the owners, or sold.

Upon entering the museum all objects MUST have a completed donation form, signed by the legal owner of the item. The DeBence Antique Music World Donation Form was approved by the board of directors on XX/XX/2024. The form should be completed to the best knowledge of the donor. Detailed provenance will be recorded to ensure legal compliance and prevent the illegal trafficking of stolen objects. This ensures all items are legally owned by the museum and that there is accurate contact information for the originators of the object in case they need to be contacted or the object needs to be returned.

Orphaned objects which find their way into the museum without corresponding records will be considered as part of the collection of the museum. It will be assumed that the museum has legal title and possession of these items unless a claim of ownership is made or information is received indicating the contrary. Unclaimed loaned property which is discovered within the museum will be considered in compliance with Pennsylvania Senate Bill No. 228 and attempts to contact the owners will be made via the approved routes set out within the bill. If the museum is unable to contact or establish legal ownership for unclaimed loaned property, the items will be accessioned as part of the museum's permanent collection.

Objects being considered for inclusion in the collection can be evaluated under the criteria listed below. These elements are not exhaustive and other factors may come into play in the decision to accept an item into the museum or not. However, the decision should NOT consider the financial value of an object.

- Condition
- Required maintenance of the object
- Provenance
- Relevant legal restrictions
- Historic value
- Narrative value
- Space restrictions

- Conservation needs
- Dangers to staff or the collection
- Mechanical operation
- Required financial investment for preservation/maintenance/operation
- Local history

The museum director will make decisions regarding what items they recommend for accession into the collection. The director's report to the board of recommendation for inclusion in the collection should include object description, condition, historic value, reason for inclusion, and any other pertinent details. The recommendations of the director can be reviewed by the board and final decisions are at the discretion of the board of directors. Any donor conditions or restrictions of gift will need to be reviewed and approved by the board. Objects that are approved will be accessioned into the collection. All donations that come through the door will be reviewed and assessed for inclusion in the collection. All museum staff and volunteers have the right to accept donations offered to the museum which will be held for consideration by the director or board of directors. The board of directors has the right to make the final decision on any objects to be accessioned.

On the rare occasion when an object is offered for purchase by the museum the director may make a recommendation to purchase to the board of directors. It is then the responsibility of the board to decide if the piece should be purchased for the museum collection and the price they are willing to pay for the piece. All acquisitions, regardless of price, must be pre-approved by the board of directors.

Only trained staff members or volunteers should accession objects. Consistency of records is vital to the museum as the records of objects are nearly as important as the objects themselves. When objects have been approved for accession the donation form will be used, in addition to any independent research, to input the object records into the museum collections software, PastPerfect. The record and the created accession number will then be written on the donation form and a tag or label will be created for the object with the applied accession number. This number is forever attached to the object. It should always remain with the piece and, even if deaccessioned, the number will never be reused but rather will always be attached to the deaccessioned record. After accessioning the object may then be considered for display or storage, and any other necessary steps can be taken (conservation, etc.)

Advice from all stakeholders in the museum will be considered when appraising objects for accession, however the responsibility for final decisions will follow the hierarchy articulated above.

Deaccessioning/Disposal

The decision to deaccession artifacts from the museum should always be carefully considered with regard to the future of the museum. This decision should involve multiple stakeholders in the museum to ensure that different viewpoints are represented in the discussion

to deaccession. We maintain that deaccessioning is a part of the healthy cycle of a museum collection. As we refine our focus and our commitment to our mission it may be necessary to remove items from the collection for many different reasons. However, deaccessioning should never be used as a means to financially stabilize the museum. The collection is held in the public trust; therefore, it belongs to the public and we are only the caretakers of this collection. As such all decisions must be made with the needs of the public as top priority. The collection held by the museum is a cultural asset and not a financial one.

Criteria that could qualify an item for deaccessioning are as follows. The financial value of an object should NEVER factor into the decision to deaccession an artifact:

- Condition
- Ethical considerations
- Care requirements
- Museum mandate
- Hazard to staff or other objects
- Financial requirements of care
- Legal restrictions
- Redundant or duplicate piece
- Low historic value

An item may be recommended for deaccessioning by the director. The director may act on the recommendation of other staff or volunteers in looking at pieces for deaccession. These recommendations must be thought out and researched. Pieces that are considered for deaccession should be carefully researched and records of the object in the museum examined to ensure legal compliance and to gather as much information as possible before deciding. A report to the board of directors can then be prepared, accounting for the provenance and history of the object and the reasons it is being recommended for deaccession. The board of directors has the final decision regarding the deaccessioning of an object.

When an object is marked for deaccession it will be labelled as such in the museum records software PastPerfect. The accession number assigned to the object will not be reused but will continue to be associated with the record of deaccession to avoid confusion. All information regarding the deaccession of the object should be recorded in the museum records, such as deaccession method, sale price, buyer, date deaccessioned or disposed, and any other information available.

The board of directors is also responsible for making the final decision as to how an object will leave the museum. This can take many different forms, disposal, placement in another historical institution, sale, returned to the donor, etc. If possible, an item should be placed with another institution to remain accessible to the public, such as another museum, historical society, or other non-profit. If this is not possible it is the goal of the museum to notify the donor of the items deaccession. The museum may choose to return it to the donor if possible. Deaccessioned items may be considered for sale or disposal based on condition. The relevant associations may be consulted in this matter, such as Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors Association

(AMICA), the Reed Organ Society, Music Box Society International, or others. Items must never be sold or given to museum staff or board members.

It is of equal importance to maintain care of our current collections as it is to acquire new pieces for the museum. Funds generated from the sale of deaccessioned items must only be used for the direct care of the collection. This may include conservation treatments, acquisitions of new pieces, necessary repairs, archival storage improvements, etc. The decision of how to spend funds resulting from the sale of collections is at the discretion of the board.

Loans

The DeBence does not typically accept loans of items however if the item is of exceptional quality or historic value a loan may be considered. If an artifact of interest is offered via a loan to the museum the director may make a recommendation to the board, who will have the responsibility of making a final decision to accept any loaned property and setting the terms of the loan.

Objects in Custody

As with many museums the DeBence sometimes comes across items that have been accepted into the museum with no records. These objects in custody are assumed to be legally owned by the museum, however we have no records by which to confirm this. Objects in custody will be treated as accessioned objects unless a competing claim, or contrary information is produced regarding the legal ownership of such objects. Claims of ownership will be evaluated by the board of directors. Objects in custody will be accessioned and noted that they are without provenance in the museum records.

Care

The DeBence will endeavor, at all times, to provide a safe and appropriate environment for the maintenance of the collections, including security, environmental controls, and condition monitoring. The museum will maintain a Disaster Preparedness Plan that is regularly updated in case of necessary emergency care for the collection.

To ensure that future generations are also able to enjoy this collection the DeBence aims to a high standard of care regarding the objects in our custody. The museum exists to preserve the world class collection of musical instruments and machines which we have been entrusted to care for. We must strike a difficult balance as we value the continued operation of our musical machines but understand that this operation also comes at a cost to the life of the piece. However, through mitigation techniques we find that these competing priorities are not impossible to reconcile. As with the guidelines above these recommendations may not apply to every object and every situation. Therefore, thorough research is essential to determine the best course of action.

Collections Assessment

As the DeBence maintains a small staff within the museum it is essential that regular monitoring of the collection is conducted for preventative measures. A full collections

assessment will be conducted once a year wherein all items in the collection will be observed, checked, and any condition changes will be noted. This assessment will be carried out by museum staff or volunteers.

All records created or associated with an object, such as research, related ephemera, or contextual information, will be stored with the records for the object and permanently associated with the object. All artifact records within the museum will be maintained and kept up to date regarding the life of the object within the museum. These records will be maintained in the museum's collections management database (PastPerfect.)

Access

The museum collection is maintained for the benefit of the public and as such the museum facilitates access to the collections for the public. The collection will be available to any interested parties, researchers, historians, and students, for their work unless it would be harmful to the object. The museum will endeavor to assist researchers while maintaining the preservation of the collection.

Appraisals

The museum does not offer appraisals of objects. However, if a donor would like to have an outside appraisal performed the museum will turn over any records we have on an object in order to facilitate this.

Staff Collecting

It is understood that museum staff and board members may be engaged in the personal collecting of musical instruments. However, staff are not to use their association with the museum to engage in personal collecting. To avoid conflicts of interest regarding personal collecting staff and board members have an obligation to report to the museum board of directors if they are aware of an available artifact that may be of interest to the museum collection, that is if it is a historic automatic instrument. This notification may be prior to or after the person has acquired the object. The museum board of directors will then be given the option to purchase or accept a donation of the object. If it is determined that the object will not be accepted for the collection museum staff may maintain it in their personal collection.

Review and Revision

This policy is not meant to stand as a final product of our efforts in regard to the museum collection, but rather to offer a more wholistic understanding of the museum collection, and as such it should be reviewed every five years to ensure we have a current and accurate understanding.

Glossary

Deaccession- The official removal of an object from the museum records, typically for the eventual disposal, sale, or gift to another party.

Disposal- The act of physically removing an object from the museum by process determined by the museum board of directors.

Accession- The recording of a new object in the collection of the museum.

Orphaned Objects- Objects which were loaned to the museum, but the original owners are no longer able to be contacted regarding the loan.

Provenance- Place of origin or earliest known history, the recorded train of ownership of an object.

Acquisition- An object bought for addition to the museum collection.

Objects in Custody- Objects that are in the museum collection but for which the museum has no records.

Donation- A gift of money, goods, or services made to the museum.