



Frequently Asked Questions: Donating to the Kentucky Historical Society

What does KHS collect?

KHS collects objects, photographs, oral histories, documents of all kinds, books and genealogical materials – anything that tells the story of Kentucky and its people.

What's the procedure for donating an item to the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS)?

First, make an appointment (in person or by phone) with the appropriate staff person. KHS staff will discuss the item with you and determine if it seems appropriate for our collections. If the object should be considered, we will complete a temporary custody form with you and will store the object(s) in a secure place until the KHS Collections Committee review takes place. This review usually takes place within two to four weeks, but we ask that you allow us up to 90 days (some items require more review time). If the object is not available for inspection, we will ask that you provide detailed photographs along with any available background information.

How does KHS decide what to accept?

The selection process is rigorous and ensures that KHS only accepts pieces that it can properly care for and that can help tell Kentucky's story. When an item is offered, a staff person studies the object, researches the collection for similar items and presents all information to the KHS Collections Committee. The committee, comprised of curators, archivists, librarians, historians and folklorists, discusses whether the object meets the KHS collecting criteria and votes on whether to accept it.

What are the collecting criteria?

These questions inform our decision:

What is the Kentucky connection? Do we have other items like it in our collection? Does this one tell a better story? What is its condition? How much of its history do we know? Can we properly take care of it?

Will the KHS staff appraise the donation?

No. Due to legal and ethical rules, KHS staff are not allowed to appraise items for any reason. All appraisals are the responsibility of the donor.

Are donations tax deductible?

Many donations to KHS collections are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Your tax preparer can provide the details.

Am I giving up ownership of the item(s)?

All donations are considered unrestricted gifts unless it is otherwise stated on the donation form. Once the collections committee decides to accept an item(s), KHS gives a “Deed of Gift” to the owner. This document transfers legal ownership of the item(s) to the Kentucky Historical Society.

What happens to the items once they become KHS property?

Items are cataloged and stored in environmentally safe and secured areas. They may be used in on-site exhibitions or loaned for exhibition to other institutions. Although there is no guarantee that the item(s) will always be on display, KHS collections are available for research purposes. Many are in our online databases and we add to them on a regular basis.