



Collection Development Policy
Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections
Updated 2023

Introduction

The Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections is a non-circulating cultural heritage repository located in the Beall-Dawson Historical Park in Rockville, Maryland, under the operation of Montgomery History (MH), a.k.a. the Montgomery County Historical Society. The Library collects, preserves, and provides reference access to primary and secondary research sources that best document the political, social, cultural, economic and natural history of Montgomery County, Maryland, as well as those secondary and tertiary sources that similarly document the history of adjacent areas. The intent of this policy is to direct the organization in its efforts to collect, preserve and provide access to relevant historical documentation and records of life and activities in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Mission Statement

Montgomery History's mission is "to collect, preserve, interpret, and share the histories of all of Montgomery County's residents."

To fulfill its mission, MH actively collects and holds library and archival materials relating to: the history of Montgomery County, Maryland; its residents past and present; and the businesses, organizations, and institutions that have made an impact on its residents. These collections are extremely varied in format, including but not limited to: audiovisual and digital materials, books, manuscripts, maps, microfilm, periodicals, and photographs.

In addition, these library and archives collections support the MH staff as a repository of general reference materials and a source for illustrations and other materials used in museum exhibits and promotional material. Materials about adjacent areas that document aspects of the history of Maryland or the Mid-Atlantic region's people, natural resources, and their interaction are also included in the collections.

Current Collections (What We Have)

The Library's collections are classified into one of two categories:

1) *The Library /Reference Collection* is largely composed of published and unpublished secondary sources available on the main floor of the Sween Library building, directly accessible to the public but non-circulating. The focus of the collection is on Montgomery County and Maryland history with emphasis on the following themes:

- Historical houses and land ownership in Montgomery County
- Genealogy in Maryland (specifically Montgomery County), with appropriate supporting materials from surrounding counties, as well as the District of Columbia, Virginia, Delaware, Kentucky, and Ohio.
- Development of business, industry, commerce, and communities in Montgomery County
- Military service and the history of wars fought by Montgomery County enlisted men

Format of materials:

Published books and unpublished manuscripts, digital materials, microfilm, periodicals, photographs, slides, postcards, newspaper clippings (articles and obituaries), genealogy/family tree documentation, and maps.

2) *Special Collections* refers to the manuscript and archives collections, the majority of which are kept on the second floor of the Sween Library building. These collections are available to the public for research, but are kept in closed stacks where they can be retrieved on request by staff or volunteers. The creators of these materials in MH's collection include notable Montgomery County residents as well as local businesses and organizations, and center on the following themes:

- Ongoing development of Montgomery County communities and neighborhoods
- Family histories and social activity
- Activities of clubs, organizations, businesses, and centers of community life (such as churches, schools, and other civic institutions)
- Research notes compiled on various topics relevant to Montgomery County history, by published and amateur historians

Format of materials:

Correspondence, photographs, diaries, scrapbooks, ledgers, almanacs, maps, atlases, architectural drawings, blueprints, various ephemera (brochures, cards, certificates, art, flyers, pamphlets and posters), family Bibles, oral history recordings and accompanying transcripts, VHS tapes, cassette tapes, vinyl records, CDs and DVDs, rare books, periodicals, newspapers, and yearbooks. Many of these items have been digitized for access and preservation; other materials were received in born-digital form. These materials exist as PDFs, JPEGs, WAV, MP3, and MOV files.

Collecting Focus (What We're Looking For)

Current collections are strong in the areas of general Maryland genealogy and history, largely as it pertains to the historical majority of the population during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries; i.e., middle to upper class white families and their accomplishments.

To address gaps in the historical record of Montgomery County as a whole, future acquisitions should focus on material documenting:

- Immigrant populations, beginning in the early 20th century and continuing into the 21st century, including records of religious institutions, community centers, immigrant-founded businesses, photographs, and other ephemera.
- African-American and Black families and communities, particularly community records of churches, cemeteries, and schools, as well as family records such as Bibles, photographs, and genealogies.
- Women and minorities in the areas of politics, education, community leadership, social reform, and social justice.

Condition of Acceptable Donations

Material will be considered for accession based on the following criteria:

- Montgomery County provenance, condition of material, accessibility to patrons, size, uniqueness of the materials to the collections or in general, local/ regional/ state provenance.
- Material will not be considered for accession if it has suffered damage from untreated mold, chemicals, or pests; or if it has suffered other damage requiring heroic preservation methods beyond the scope of MH's ability and/or conservation budget.
- Three-dimensional objects generally fall under the purview of the museum collection and will not be accessioned by the Library except under unique circumstances.
- Material that duplicates existing collection material will not be considered except in circumstances of rarity or heavy use, where extra copies may be retained for eventual replacement of existing material.
- Donor restrictions on access to donated material are considered only within reason. Heavily restricted material does not support the mission of MH, which lists the sharing of community history among its goals; instead, we wish to devote our limited resources to historical material that can be fully shared with the public. Donations that must remain permanently closed to the public are not accepted at this time.

Donation Process

If you have one or more items you would like to donate to MH, please contact the Archivist/Librarian at the Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections to discuss your donation and how the material might fit within the scope of our collection. If your donation meets the guidelines outlined above, you will be asked to sign a Deed of Gift transferring ownership of the material to MH.