Lock, Stock and Barrel: Firearms Collecting for Museums
June 15, 2016

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Common Questions Related to Firearm Collecting

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Is it illegal?

- Federal Law
  - National Firearms Act
- State Law
  - Varies by state so be sure to contact a local ATF agent

Japanese, water-cooled aircraft model machine gun
Is it legal?

• Does the National Firearms Act Regulate...
  – Machine Guns? YES
  – Rifles? NO
  – Pistols? NO
  – Shotguns? NO (unless short-barreled)
  – Mortars and other destructive devices? YES
  – Silencers? YES

Japanese Knee Mortar
Is it legal?

• Regulated does not mean illegal!
  – Machine Guns, must be registered
    • Form 4
  – Non-registered machine guns, can be transferred to government entities (including museums)
    • Form 10

1928 Thompson Sub-Machine Gun
Is it legal?

• Antique Firearms
  – Those made before 1898 are not regulated
    • Examples: musket or flintlock rifles

• Curio and Relics
  – Firearms more than 50 years old, or of special interest

Japanese Type 14 Nambu pistol of Kamikaze pilot which struck the USS Saratoga
Am I legal?

• Curio and Relics (C&R) License
  – Is a form of an Federal Firearms License (FFL)
  – Allows for easier transfer and shipping

“Broomhandle”
C-96 Mauser Pistol
Physical Acceptance—In Person

- Require an appointment
- No live ammunition
- No loaded guns
- Be conscientious of those around you
- Be aware of your surroundings
Physical Acceptance—By Mail

• Four Factors (part 1)
  – Who is sending the gun
    • Usually a private individual to a licensed collector (this is where having the C&R is very helpful)
  – Who is receiving the gun
    • As a museum you can use a local licensed FFL dealer
    • Or use your C&R
Physical Acceptance—By Mail

• Four Factors (part 2)
  – What kind of gun it is
    • Antique
    • Handgun (in state vs. out of state)
    • Modern Gun (in state vs. out of state)
  – Method of shipment
    • USPS
    • Common Carriers
Physical Acceptance—By Mail

• General Guidelines
  – Insure packages for the full insurance value of the firearm(s)
  – Declare the contents (this is where knowing the law becomes helpful since many employees at shipping places may not)
  – Require Signatures
  – Pack like you would any artifact

German, STG-44
Helpful Links

• Shipping
  – [http://www.wikihow.com/Mail-a-Firearm](http://www.wikihow.com/Mail-a-Firearm)
Physical Control

• In Storage
  – Specialized Storage Cabinets
  – Controlled space within storage
  – Access

• On Display
  – Mounts
  – Cases
  – Firing Pins
Physical Control

• Handling
  – Always treat firearms as if they are loaded
  – Wear gloves
  – Be careful of working the actions on firearms

• Security
  – Where are firearms stored?
  – How are they stored?
  – Who has access?
  – How are movements monitored?
Physical Control

• Access
  – Designate who does (and does not) have access to firearms
  – Designate times when firearms ARE NOT to be accessed
  – Designate what happens in an emergency

• Inventory
  – Establish a firearms register
  – Establish a regular inventory of firearms
  – Do random spot checks
  – Have a witness
Physical Control
Preservation of Firearm Collections

Paul Storch
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How do you manage the preservation of a firearms collection in your museum?

CONCEPTS

• Firearms are composite objects - Patina
• Preventative conservation - Tarnish/corrosion
• Restoration - Organic/inorganic
• Conservation
• Retreatability/reversibility
• Compatibility/stability
• Working order
• Firing order
Handling and Assessment

First level of preservation- preserving information
  – Catalog/accession information is completed
  – Object is labeled/tagged

Recommendations for Handling:
  - Check for load in new firearms using a dowel or cleaning rod for muzzle-loaders
  - If breech loading, open the breech or chamber and check for loads
  - If loaded: remove cartridges and dispose of properly
    black powder/ball found- contact gunsmith and set object aside, clearly marked

Systematic Survey:
  - Assess the overall condition of each firearm
    - Catalog number/ correct name/ manufacturer/ serial number and any other markings
    - exterior examination: metal parts for corrosion, residues
      wood parts for cracks, surface finish condition, mold, insect damage
    - interior of barrel: corrosion, residues
    - partial disassembly
# Example of Survey Ranking Scheme

## TABLE 1. Suggestions for Conditions Ratings used to Survey Objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Priority/Treatment Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Stable, no observed corrosion, breakage or structural problems</td>
<td>Low priority; surface cleaning only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Stable, some previous corrosion observed, possible active corrosion</td>
<td>Low priority; surface cleaning; check on regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Stable, with active corrosion in several areas; wood fair to good</td>
<td>Medium priority; surface cleaning required; treat corroded areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Unstable; active corrosion observed; structure unstable; loose/broken parts</td>
<td>High priority; stabilization treatment required; restoration may be part of overall treatment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Condition Survey Worksheet

CONSERVATION CONDITION SUMMARY FORM

Accession number #: ____________________ Object: ____________________

Condition Assessor(s): ____________________

Date(s): ____________________

Conservation Assessment Summary:

Overall Condition Ranking (1= Poor/ 4= Excellent): 1 2 3 4

Treatment Priority (1-3): 1 2 3 4

Est. Hrs.: 0 1-2 2-3 3-4 5-6 6-8 10-12 12+

Condition Ratings:

Metal:
Barrel:
Corrosion: _____ Tarnish: ___ Scratches: ______ Residues: ______

Lock:
Corrosion: _____ Tarnish: ___ Scratches: ______ Residues: ______

Stock furniture:
Corrosion:_____ Tarnish___ Scratches:______ Residues:_______

Wood:
Cracks:_______ Scratches: _____ Finish problems:______ Mold:____

Insect damage:____

Other Materials:
Cracks:________ Scratches:_____ Residues:_______

Condition Notes: (short narrative describing whether corrosion is stable or unstable, structural problems, other observations)
Examples of conditions
Examples of conditions
Handling, Storage, and Display

• Handling long-arms: always use both hands; lay external lock weapons with lock side up or use blocks. Be aware of length.
• Upright storage is best for long-arms- support at several point; affords best view without handling, space efficient.
• Labeling: attach laser printed labels with acrylic resin.
• Handguns- organize in padded drawers; store out of holsters and belts; store leather out of contact with metal.
• Storage Conditions: Avoid extreme fluctuations on high and low ends, allowing for annual fluctuations, e.g. Temp: 65-72, RH: 30%-55%; avoid basement storage if possible. Dehumidifiers can be installed; monitor.
• Light: Eliminate UV, Vis <150 Lux (<150,000 Lux hrs.) on exhibit; rotate collections.
• Avoid mounts that go into the barrel, or wrap around trigger guards. Mounts should be padded, afford support, but are easy to remove.
Storage examples
Storage examples
Storage examples
Storage examples
Storage examples
Cleaning and Treatment

• Cleaning w/o disassembly: wipe with dry, lint free cloth

• Do Not Use:
  – Metal polishes or cleaners
  – Wood polishes
  – “gun cleaners”
  – Oils
  – Varnishes
    • Spray or brushed
Disassembly

• Assistance from firearms collectors, if possible
• Refer to Tech Talk Part II
• Have proper ventilation for solvents and/or PPE
• Use exploded gun diagrams
• Assemble basic tools
  – Gun rods: long gun and pistol lengths
  – Brush and patch attachments
  – Gunsmith screwdriver set
  – Gun punches
  – Rawhide mallets
  – Dowels
  – Mainspring vise
  – Padded “Panavise” or equivalent
Basic Treatments

• Corrosion reduction
• Degreasing
• Cleaning of metal and wood components
• Barrel interior stabilization
• Coating/waxing
• Documentation of interior parts and conditions for further intervention
Disassembly
Resources

• CCI Bulletin No. 16: Care and Preservation of Firearms:  

• Gun Digest Exploded Gun Drawings- Free Download link: 
  https://freedownloadxgundigestbookofexplodedgundrawings.wordpress.com/ 
  2014/03/20/gun-digest-book-of-exploded-gun-drawings-free-download/

• Link to MNHS “Tech Talk” Series:  http://www.mnhs.org/shpo/lhs/techtalk.php

• Current Link to the “Track of the Wolf” website- resource for black powder supplies, parts, and books:  https://www.trackofthewolf.com/

• Image Permanence Institute website- provides valuable information for understanding storage climates and materials:  https:// 
  www.eclimatenotebook.com/fundamentals_nl.php
QUESTIONS ?