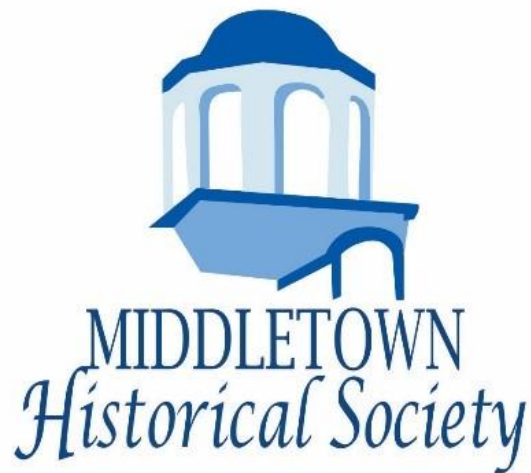


Middletown Historical Society Collections Development Plan



Approved by the Board of Directors: 2/8/2022, Middletown, DE

Middletown Historical Society Mission

The Society collects, preserves, educates, and encourages the development of Middletown's history in order to foster historic awareness and pride in our community.

Middletown Historical Society Theme Statement and Thematic Topics

Over time, people from diverse perspectives shaped Middletown through their interests and experiences.

Thematic Topic 1—Storytelling

Storytelling communicates our shared history in ways that engage the public with Middletown's history, weaving a thread through time.

Thematic Topic 2—People

People shaped Middletown through time.

Thematic Topic 3—Diversity

Diverse perspectives encourage exhibitions and programs that tell comprehensive and empowering stories as we bridge past and present.

When Interpretative Plan is revisited ideas of larger historical events should be taken into account.

Collections Development Plan Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to guide future collecting at the Middletown Historical Society. It is to be used in conjunction with the Society's Collection Management Policy and is to be a useful addition to that policy's Scope of Collections, seen below. It is recognized that this plan is not comprehensive and that there may be times when there are items offered outside its parameters. Decisions for acceptance of such items shall lie with the Collections Committee guided by the Scope of Collections. When used in this plan, the term Middletown and its derivatives refers to the broader area of M.O.T as defined in the Society's Collection Management Policy.

Scope of Collections

Recognizing the limited resources of the Middletown Historical Society, items and collections considered for the collection must meet a majority of the following qualifications:

- Documented relevance to the development and identity of Middletown throughout its history
- Recognizing Middletown's influence as a center for surrounding communities, items may have been made or used in Delaware or Maryland. Artifacts are preferred if they originated in Middletown.
- The provenance should be based upon documented primary sources.
- It must be in good or easily repairable condition
- Items must not excessively duplicate material already in the MHS's collection

The Society does not collect items made with hazardous materials.

Purpose and Use of the Collection

The Society's collections are preserved and maintained in perpetuity to further its mission and may only be used in ways that appropriately support that mission like exhibition and research. The collections may not be used for any purpose that may damage the collections or reflects poorly on the reputation of the Society. When there is any doubt or question, appropriate or inappropriate use will be determined by the Collections Committee.

Framework Summary

The Middletown Historical Society of Middletown, Delaware was founded in 1985. The organization was born from the grassroots fight to save an historic structure called Greenlawn in Middletown, Delaware. Started as a volunteer supported organization, the Society has continued to impact the community through programming, special events, exhibitions, and the creation of a historic artifact collection related to Middletown and its environs. In 2019, the Society designed its first strategic plan. Through the development of the strategic plan, the Society created a Collections Management Policy and conducted a raw inventory of the collections. This Collections Development Plan is the continuation of the organization's commitment to the physical and intellectual control of its collections. This includes the management of the collection through cataloging, documentation, and proper storage. In creating this plan, the membership of the Society, the Collections Committee, and the Board held blue-sky thinking meetings to discuss future collecting goals. Data from our community surveys, and the raw inventory were consulted in the formation of this plan.

Local Collecting Institutions

The Middletown Historical Society is located in an area that has a rich history. There are a number of local, historical, and cultural collecting institutions. The following institutions have overlapping collecting interests with the Middletown Historical Society:

- The Historic Odessa Foundation, Odessa, Delaware: focuses its collecting on materials from only Odessa, Delaware from the 18th to early 19th centuries especially related to the Wilson and Corbit families.
- Port Penn Interpretive Center, Port Penn, Delaware: run by the State of Delaware, it collects materials related to Port Penn from the 18th to 20th centuries.
- St. Francis Xavier Shrine and Old Bohemia Historical Society, Warwick, Maryland: collects materials related to the history of St. Francis Xavier Church, related items to the Catholic faith, and artifacts related to the early history of Warwick.
- Historical Society of Cecil County, Elkton, Maryland: collects materials related to the history of Cecil County from the 18th century to the present.
- Delaware Military Museum, Newark, Delaware: collects items related to Delawareans and the military.

- Newark Historical Society, Newark, Delaware: collects materials related to the history of Newark, Delaware from the 18th century to the present, collection includes items related to the Newark Train Station and trains.
- Duck Creek Historical Society and Smyrna Museum: collects materials related to the history of Duck Creek and Smyrna, Delaware from the 18th century to the present.
- Pencader Heritage Museum, Newark, Delaware: collects materials related to the history of Pencader Hundred, agriculture, and the Battle of Cooch's Bridge.
- Nanticoke Indian Museum in Millsboro, Delaware: Prior to European contact the Lenni-Lenape tribe lived in the area. The Lenni-Lenape and Southern Delaware Nanticoke are now confederated and collect and display artifacts related to their history and culture at the Nanticoke Indian Museum.
- Delaware Agricultural Museum, Dover, Delaware: collect archives, artifacts, and equipment related to the farming history of Delaware.
- Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware and Delaware Archives, Dover, Delaware: both collect archives and artifacts related to the history of Delaware from the 17th century to the present.

Current Strengths of the Collection

The Society currently has robust collections in the following areas and is seeking no more items related to these collections at this time or only collecting in limited quantities:

- The Middletown Centennial in 1961
- *The Middletown Transcript* Newspapers, 1868-1992
- *The Middletown Transcript* printing machinery, type, printing furniture, etc.
- 19th and 20th century banking documents
- Items related to the Berkman family and store
- Mid-20th century paper dolls
- Women's dress patterns from the 1920s to the 1940s
- Items related to Noxontown mill in the late 19th and early 20th century
- Evans and Motter Family items
- Postcards, unless the note is of historical importance or the photo fills a gap in the collection
- Mid-20th century and later road maps
- Mid-20th century flour sacks
- Archival items related to Forest Presbyterian Church
- Mid-20th century kitchen items
- Generic school items before 1900
 - The Society will still collect items related to the specific schools in Middletown
- Mid-20th century children's toys
- Chalk Boards from the Old Academy

Future Collecting

The Society is committed to collecting the history of Middletown in a number of ways which will expand community participation and awareness in our shared history. Items can be historic artifacts, archives, or digital items.

Specific Items to Collect

- A Janvier family made piece of furniture
- A Duncan Beard made item
 - A gun lock from the 1770s
- Representative materials related to the New Century Club
- Representative materials from the Volunteer Hose Company, Inc.
 - The Society does not collect fire apparatus
- Objects from a Middletown tannery
- Horse collar by John “Jack” Green on East Main Street
- Items related to the Middletown Post Office
 - A mail bag used by a Middletown Mail Carrier
- Representative items related to the Everett Theatre
 - Costumes, props, scripts, programs, small set pieces, identified photographs
- Photographs with identified people and places, especially from the 20th century and later
- Yearbooks for Middletown schools: limiting collecting to 2 books from each year.
- Games and toys from the 18th and early 19th centuries and the later 20th century to the present.

Collecting in Topical Areas

The following are areas in which the Society needs to strengthen its collections. Items can be historic artifacts, archival materials, or digital items.

Historically Marginalized Communities: Middletown has long been made up of people from many different backgrounds. It is the intention of the Society to bring greater representation of historically marginalized groups to our collections to foster historic awareness in our community.

Farming: From Middletown’s founding, agriculture and farming was a major economic driver, with the town businesses supporting local farmers. It is the aim of the Society to expand object collections related to farming, agriculture, and the businesses that supported these endeavors.

- Due to space limitations the Society is unable to collect large farm equipment

Ephemera from the Mid-20th Century Forward: Just as many towns and communities go through periods of affluence, Middletown experienced a period of economic prosperity starting in the 1950s. The Society intends to increase its holdings of materials and ephemera related to both this period of affluence from the 1950s to the late 1970s, and also document the rapid change in the town from the 1980s to the present.

Photographs of Identified Middletown Places and People: While the Society has an extensive number of photographs in its collections, not all of them are identified. It is the objective of the

Society to collect photographs of people and places that can be identified as having connections with the area.

Middletown Family Histories: Family histories are one of the best ways to be able to see the connections among various people in a local community and help to tell the stories that make up the history of Middletown. The Society intends to continue collecting family histories to be able to tell these different stories. These collections may be added to the Society's research collection or formally accessioned into the archive. This can include oral histories, archival items, photographs and publish materials.

Businesses in Downtown Middletown: To reflect the economic history of the town, the Society plans to collect materials related to businesses, with an emphasis on businesses located in Middletown. Areas of collecting interest include: sample groups of organization's records, signage, advertising materials, material sold at businesses, identified photographs of the business or people shopping at the business. This includes professions like doctors, lawyers, and dentists.

Items Made in Middletown: Currently, the Society has items that were used in Middletown but limited items made by Middletonians. It is the intention of the Society to expand the representation of Middletown made items to be able to tell stories that reflect the craftsmanship and ingenuity of Middletonians.

Items Related to Transportation: Transportation of many kinds has been a part of the history of Middletown from carriage builders, to the railroad, to car dealerships. The Society desires to collect items related to transportation and its related industries.

- Due to space restrictions the Society is unable to collect full sized cars, trains, carriages, or wagons.

Sports Items: Middletonians have a long history of participating in different sports as hobbyists, in school, and at the professional level. It is the intention of the Society to increase its holdings of materials related to sports and sporting events.

- Due to space restrictions the Society is unable to collect oversized items.

School Related Materials: As the Society is housed in the Old Middletown Academy the organization is interested in materials related to education in Middletown. The Society is interested in continuing to collect materials related to Middletown Schools and education.

- The Society will not collect student records post 1960 due to the Family Educational Rights and Protection Act.

Military Items: As Middletonians and those from the local area have participated in the military from the 18th century to the present, it behooves the Society to collect items related to these different engagements.

- The Society does not collect live ordnance.

Architectural Elements: Recognizing the rich architectural history of Middletown and the surrounding community and the continued loss of that material, it is the intention of the Society to expand its collections of architectural materials.

Entertainment, Holidays, and Hobbies: Middletonians have engaged in many different holidays, festivals, events, and hobbies over the years. The Society wishes to be able to tell these stories by developing collections related to the interests of those living in the Middletown area.

Clubs and Political Organizations: Recognizing that Middletonians have participated in service organizations, the Society wishes to develop collections related to these organizations.

Communications: Middletown has long been a center of communications for the region. The Society intends to expand collections related to communications and its infrastructure.

Review of Plan

As the collections at the Middletown Historical Society continue to develop and expand, this plan should likewise be a living document. As the Society continues to gain intellectual control of its collections through inventory and cataloging, this document should be reviewed every 3 to 5 years. Review shall be done by the Collections Committee. Any major changes to the collecting initiatives shall require approval from the Board of Directors.