



# Collect like a Curator with Liberty Hall Museum

## What is a collection?

*A collection is group of objects usually brought together for their similar subject matter or purpose.*

That's a fancy definition—but what does that mean? Let's explore collections together!



### ➤ Where do collections come from?

- Collections come from individuals who have a passion for certain objects, such as art, historic items, a sport's team, etc. These individuals then go out and find examples of these objects and decide to group and store them together, making a collection. Many times these collections end up in a museum like Liberty Hall!

### ➤ What do museums do with collections?

- Museums take on the responsibility for caring and preserving their collections, so visitors like you can enjoy them. The person primarily responsible for caring for a museum collection is a curator.

### ➤ What is a curator?

- Museum curators are in charge of a collection of exhibits in a museum. Their job is to build up collections and develop ways in which objects, archives and artworks can be interpreted, through exhibitions, publications, events and audio-visual presentations.

### ➤ How do curators keep track of all the objects in a museum collection?

- Curators keep track of a collection by making sure every object has a written record of information about that object. All of that information is then stored in a catalog or a database.
- Curators will also assign each object a different number to help organize the objects. This number is called an accession number.

➤ **Does Liberty Hall have any collections?**

- Yes indeed! In fact, Liberty Hall is a museum that is made up of collections. The Livingston and Kean families preserved objects from their lifetimes that allow visitors today to learn about the past.
- One of our most famous collections is Stewart B. Kean's collection of firetrucks and firefighting memorabilia.

As a child, Stewart was fascinated with firefighting and he began collecting firefighting toys. His collection grew as an adult from toys to actual equipment. At the museum today we have four firetrucks from Stewart's collection; the oldest dates back to 1911. In fact, Stewart's collection of firefighting memorabilia is so large that it has its own building!



Our three historic engines include: 1911 American LaFrance Metropolitan Steam Pumper, 1927 American La France Fire Engine once owned by the City of Union, New Jersey, and 1928 Seagrave Fire Engine once owned by City of Elizabeth, New Jersey. There is also a 1950s Mack Firetruck housed outside the museum which can be played on. Each year the museum welcomes firefighters and first responders to tour the Firehouse Museum.



Stewart as a child by a tractor, and Stewart as an adult wearing a firefighter's hat.

## Do you have a collection?

You may already have a collection. Maybe it's a collection of rocks, stamps, coins, magnets, patches, certain types of toys, or artwork! If not, it's the perfect time to start your own collection!

Brainstorm some ideas for what you could collect. Ask your parents, siblings, or friends to help come with up ideas!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have your collection, you have become a curator. It's time to organize your collection!

## Activity 1: Create a catalog of your collection.

You can use a notebook, create a catalog on the computer, or use the Object File page below to record and organize your collection. For an example, check out the object files for the Highboy and the Tall Case Clock on the next page. For each object in your collection:

1. Photograph or draw each individual object.
2. Give your object a title.
3. Assign each object an accession number.
4. Write a description of the object. Anything you know about it.
5. Log where you acquired the object.
6. Log when you acquired the object.
7. Describe the condition of the object.
8. Where appropriate, measure and weigh the object.
9. Record where the object is currently stored.

## Example Object Files from Liberty Hall Museum

2000.3.77 ~ Highboy 04/05/2013

Collection: Liberty Hall Foundation  
 Other#: n/a  
 Object name 2: High Chest  
 Object name 3: High Chest  
 Version#: LHF2000  
 Othername: High Chest  
 Received as: Gift  
 Received date: 01/23/2012  
 Cataloged by: Rachael Goldberg  
 Catalog date: 01/23/2012  
 Source: Liberty Hall Foundation  
 Creditline: Highboy

Home loc: Main House:Martha Washington Room  
 Description: Queen Anne cherrywood bonnet-top high-chest, with carved fans ending with cabriole legs and pad feet  
 Appears to retain original brass-Sotheby's

Date: Circa 1760  
 Year Range: 1730 - 1760  
 Condition: Good  
 Status date: Status by: RG  
 Status: LHF

Height: 0.000 in  
 Width: 0.000 in  
 Length: 0.000 in  
 Depth: 0.000 in  
 Diameter: 0.000 in  
 Circum: 0.000 in  
 Weight: 0.000 oz  
 Count: Dim Notes H: 7' 4"  
 W: 36"  
 D: 21"

Collector: Collector  
 Site: Coll date: // Site#

PI origin: CT  
 Event: Event  
 Material: Material  
 Found: Found  
 Used: Used  
 Made: Made  
 Owned: Owned  
 Title: Title  
 Provenance: Daniel Why, Aspinwall Family  
 Artist: Artist

Makers mark: Makers mark  
 Inscription type: Inscription type  
 Inscript tech: Inscript tech  
 Inscript lang: Inscript lang  
 Updated by: 04/04/2018 10:50 AM RFG  
 Inscription text: Inscription text  
 Inscription position: Inscription position  
 Inscription translation: Inscription translation

Page 1

**Object Name:** Highboy

**Accession Number:** 2000.3.77

**Description:** Queen Anne Cherrywood bonnet-top high chest, with carved fans ending with cabriole legs and pad feet

**Date:** Circa 1760

**Height:** 7'4"

**Width:** 36"

**Depth:** 21"

2000.15.8 ~ Clock, Tall Case 06/18/2014

Collection: John Keen  
 Other#: 289  
 Object name 2: Object name 3  
 Object name 3: Object name 3  
 Version#: 289  
 Othername: Object name 3  
 Received as: Rachael Goldberg  
 Received date: 02/07/2011  
 Cataloged by: Rachael Goldberg  
 Catalog date: 02/07/2011  
 Source: Rachael Goldberg  
 Creditline: Clock

Home loc: Main House:Upstairs Hallway  
 Description: Case: mahogany  
 Dial: Americana reliefs with black hand painted Roman numerals as the hour markers and Arabic numerals at 15 minutes intervals  
 Movement Properties: chronometer with hand cranked pendulum mechanism and a non functioning date retrograde and functioning seconds subdial

Date: Circa 19th C  
 Year Range: 0 - 0  
 Condition: Good  
 Status date: Status by: JK  
 Status: On Loan

Height: 0.000 in  
 Width: 0.000 in  
 Length: 0.000 in  
 Depth: 0.000 in  
 Diameter: 0.000 in  
 Circum: 0.000 in  
 Weight: 0.000 oz  
 Count: Dim Notes

Collector: Collector  
 Site: Coll date: // Site#

PI origin: American Made  
 Event: Event  
 Material: Material  
 Found: Found  
 Used: Used  
 Made: Made  
 Owned: Owned  
 Title: Title  
 Provenance: interior door panel has inscriptions in pencil and white pencil (?) that overlap  
 Artist: Artist

Makers mark: Makers mark  
 Inscription type: Inscription type  
 Inscript tech: Inscript tech  
 Inscript lang: Inscript lang  
 Updated by: 07/21/2014 03:12 PM RFG  
 Inscription text: in pencil:  
 Inscription position: Interior Door  
 Inscription translation: Inscription translation

Page 8

**Object Name:** Clock, Tall Case

**Accession Number:** 2000.15.8

**Description:**

**Case:** mahogany

**Dial:** American reliefs with black hand painted Roman numerals as the hour markers and Arabic numerals at 15 minutes intervals

**Movement Properties:** chronometer with hand cranked pendulum mechanism and a non functioning date retrograde and functioning seconds subdial

**Date:** Circa 19<sup>th</sup> Century

## Object File for Catalog



1. Draw your object or take a picture of your object and attach it into the box.

2. Name of Object: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Accession Number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Description of Object: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where was the object found: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Date of Discovery: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Condition of Object: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ *pounds* Height: \_\_\_\_\_ *inches* Width: \_\_\_\_\_ *inches*

9. Current storage location:

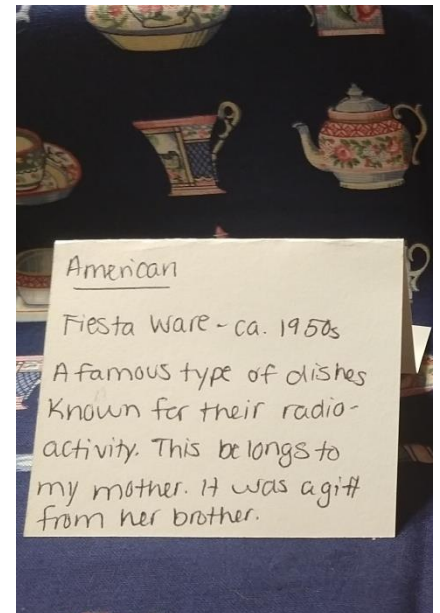
\_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 2: Create an exhibit of your collection

1. Decide what pieces from your collection will be in your exhibit.
2. Make a label for each object to be shown. Include a few sentences about each object, when it came into your collection and why it's important to you.
3. Think about the best way to display your exhibit.
4. Invite your family to an opening reception—you can even include friends and family not in your house by using FaceTime or Zoom.
5. Offer tours of your exhibit.

### Example Exhibit: Tea Through Time

An exhibit of tea cups and tea items from all over the world and various points in history.



### Want to do more?

- Read your favorite book about collecting and curating! Some of our favorites include:
  - *The Museum Book: A Guide to Strange and Wonderful Collections* by Jan Mark
  - *The Gentleman and the Kitchen Maid* by Dennis Nolan and Diane Stanley
  - *Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair* by Patricia Polacco
    - YouTube Read Aloud: <https://youtu.be/T3Mpcw4scAM>
- Looking for other books?
  - Check your local library's digital collections
  - Free Audio Book Guide from Scholastic:
    - <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/free-audio-books-and-why-you-should-try-them.html>
  - Audible Free Audiobooks
    - <https://stories.audible.com/discovery>

### Tag us on Social Media!

If you had fun curating your collection, we'd love to hear about it! Please share your stories, pictures, and drawings by emailing the museum or tagging us on our social media platforms!

- Email: [libertyhall@kean.edu](mailto:libertyhall@kean.edu)
- Facebook: libertyhallmuseum
- Instagram: @libertyhallmuseum

**The museum will be open again! Our doors are only temporarily closed. We cannot wait to see you and your family at Liberty Hall Museum soon!**

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