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# The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc. Code of Ethics

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Drafted: December, 2016  
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Collections and Exhibitions Committee Approval: May 17, 2017  
Amanda Peacock Gonzalez  
Committee Chair

Board of Directors Approval: June 6, 2017  
Reaffirmed: September 18, 2017  
Michael J. Skinner  
President, Board of Directors

## I. Preface

*“There may have been a time when preservation was about saving an old building here or there, but those days are gone. Preservation is in the business of saving communities and the values they embody.”* – Richard Moe, Former President National Trust for Historic Preservation

Built in 1793, and incorporated as a historic site in 1927 by the city of Baltimore, the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc.’s mission is grounded in its tradition of public service and education. The museum is organized as a private 501(c)(3) non-profit, holding collections and programs that benefit the public at large. Administration, staff, and board of directors are committed to upholding the core values of the Flag House Association and adherence to local, state, and federal laws that provide a framework for the governance and operations of a non-profit organization. The Code of Ethics is more than a step to avoid liability; it is at the heart of our values as a long standing cultural institution that provides outreach and educational resources to the public. The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Code of Ethics applies to all members of the governing authority, staff, and volunteers. The Flag House assumes responsibility for the actions of its employees, volunteers, and governing authority to successfully execute the Flag House’s mission within the Code of Ethics and best standards and practices for museums set forth by the American Alliance of Museums.

## II. Mission Statement

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House is dedicated to our mission of inspiring personal connections to American history through the multi-faceted story of the Star-Spangled Banner. Since the Museum of the Flag House in 1927, the Flag House has provided essential educational experiences through collections, exhibits, and events that stimulate creative and critical thinking that give a sense of time and place to visitors and the extraordinary achievements of Mary Young Pickersgill as a female business owner and the importance of the historic Flag House as a cornerstone of the diverse Baltimore communities of Jonestown and Little Italy. It is the policy of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House to collect those artifacts, archival materials, publications and other materials that date to the period in which Mary Pickersgill resided in the historic Flag House (1807-1857), the Young-Pickersgill family, and other representative materials that enrich the experience of museum visitors with the history of the flag and events surrounding the War of 1812. Collecting shall further be limited by the Flag House’s ability to provide proper care and maintenance for its collections and shall focus on the needs of the Flag House’s interpretive programs. The Flag House has in its collection an estimated 1,100 objects that range from decorative arts, fine art, domestic houseware, memorabilia and ephemera relating to anniversaries of the Star-Spangled Banner and War of 1812, photographs, works on paper, rare books, archaeological materials, and institutional archives. These objects and educational collection of informational materials are available upon request for study and research. The Flag House’s permanent exhibit employs our most prized museum pieces to tell the story of Mary Pickersgill’s life and the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag. Decorative arts and other furnishings rotate through the historic house for conservation purposes and to ensure that the Flag House is interpreting the appropriate material culture of an urban nineteenth century household and of Mary Pickersgill’s socio-economic status. The Flag House is open to the public five days a week and

for occasional special events outside of normal business hours for guided and self-guided tours of the exhibits and historic property. The Flag House regularly provides public events, living history demonstrations, lectures, and other events that support our mission.

### **III. Museum Governance**

#### **General**

The business affairs of the Museum shall be managed under the direction of its board of directors. The executive director shall be the chief executive officer of the Museum and shall in general supervise and control all of the business and affairs of the Museum. The board of directors serve the interest of the public as it relates to the operations of the Museum and are accountable for approving general standards, policy, and determining how the Museum carries out its mission through long-range and short-range planning. The Museum and board of directors prohibit discrimination on the basis of (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, or national origin, or (b) gender or age, or (c) physical or mental handicaps. The board of directors provides financial protection for all staff to prevent financial sacrifice or legal liabilities when executing duties for the Museum.

The board of directors is expected to devote attention to the business and other aspects of operations to ensure that the Museum acts in accordance with best standards and practices set forth by federal and state law and that no business jeopardizes the Museum's status as a nonprofit entity. The board of directors should maintain information about the Museum in confidence when it is not available to the public, not including information that is considered within the public domain, or information that should be made readily available and aligns with fulfilling the Museum's accountability to the public.

The board of directors hold full fiduciary responsibility for the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, its financial assets, staff, collections and related documents, and the historic 1793 property. The board of directors are accountable for developing the related policies and ensuring that the Museum's assets are used in a manner to the benefit of the public. The board of directors oversees the management of the Museum and are responsible for maintaining an environment that promotes the continued preservation and security of the historic property and direct care of collections. The board of directors will not jeopardize the Museum's collection holdings by using it as collateral for a loan or by otherwise selling the collection in order to secure funds for operations, buildings, or expansion of the facility. Funds from the sale of collection items will only be allocated to the purchase of objects that fall within the collecting policy of the institution. A Collections Management Policy adopted in February 2015, governs the use of the collection, including loans, disposal, and acquisition of objects.

## **Director and Officer Responsibilities**

All directors of the Museum have the obligation to define the duties, rights, and powers of the Executive Director. The board of directors and Executive Director work together to promote and uphold the policies and standards of the Flag House in all administrative matters. The Executive Director is obligated to bring any matters involving policy that are not already determined by the board of directors' approval and common practice to the full board of directors, and will maintain transparent and timely communication to the board of directors of any significant actions or matters that may affect the Museum.

The president shall preside at all meetings of the board of directors and shall be ex officio a member of all committees that may, from time to time, be constituted by the board of directors. The president may execute and deed, mortgage, bond, contract, or other instrument which the board of directors has authorized to be executed, except in cases where execution is expressly in conflict with the bylaws.

In the absence of the president, or in the event of a vacancy in that office, the vice president (or if there is more than one vice president, the vice presidents in the order designated at the time of their election or, in the absence of any designation, then in the order of their election) shall perform the duties of the president and when so acting shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the president; and shall perform all other duties assigned from time to time by the president or by the board of directors. The board of directors may designate one or more vice presidents as executive vice president or as vice president for particular areas of responsibility.

The secretary shall (a) keep the minutes of the proceedings of the members, the board of directors and committees of the board of directors in one or more books provided for that purpose; (b) see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law; (c) be custodian of the corporate records and of the seal of the Museum; (d) keep a register of the post office addresses, telephone numbers and facsimile numbers furnished to the secretary by the members; and (e) in general perform all other duties assigned from time to time by the president or by the board of directors.

The treasurer shall have the custody of the corporate funds and securities and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Museum and shall deposit all moneys and other valuable effects in the name and to the credit of the Museum in those depositories designated by the board of directors. The treasurer shall disburse the funds of the Museum as ordered by the board of directors, taking proper vouchers for the disbursements, and shall render to the president and board of directors, at the regular meetings of the board of directors or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the Museum.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The Museum's Conflict of Interest policy applies to board members, staff and volunteers of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc. (Flag House). A volunteer is covered under this policy if that person has been granted significant independent decision-making authority with respect to financial or other resources of the organization. All members and officers of the board of directors are required to sign an annual affirmation of compliance and disclosure statement.

Whenever there is reason to believe that an actual or potential conflict of interest exists between the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc. and an interested party, the board of directors shall determine the appropriate organizational response. This shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, refraining from the proposed action or transaction until such time as the proposed action or transaction has been approved by the disinterested members of the board of directors of the organization. In order to protect the collections holdings of the Flag House, members of the Flag House staff and board of directors cannot acquire previously accessioned objects from the collections owned by or on loan to the museum that are being removed from the collection.

Where the actual or potential conflict involves an employee of the organization other than the executive director, the executive director shall, in the first instance, be responsible for reviewing the matter and may take appropriate action as necessary to protect the interests of the organization. The executive director shall report to the Executive Committee the results and review of the action taken. The president, in consultation with the Executive Committee, shall determine if any further board review or action is required. For board members, the disclosure statements shall be provided to the president of the board, or in the case of the president's disclosure statement shall be provided to the secretary of the board. Copies shall be provided to the executive director of the organization.

In the case of staff or volunteers with significant decision-making authority the disclosure statements shall be provided to the chief executive officer of the organization, or in the case of the chief executive officer's disclosure statement shall be provided to the president of the Board. The Secretary of the board of directors shall file copies of all disclosure statements with the official corporate records of the organization.

## **IV. MUSEUM MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **Professionalism, Personnel Practices, and Equal Opportunity**

Staff of the Flag House have been engaged because of their ability or specific knowledge in some aspect of museum activity. The resolution of issues involving professional matters incorporates the opinions and professional judgments of relevant members of the staff. Responsibility for the final decisions rests with the board of directors and all staff members should support these decisions.

The Flag House promotes inclusiveness and diversity among its staff and board. In all matters related to staffing practices, the standard should be ability in the relevant profession. In these

matters, as well as board of directors' selection, management practices, volunteer opportunity, collection usage, and relationship with the public at large, decisions cannot be made on the basis of (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, or national origin, or (b) gender or age, or (c) physical or mental handicaps. The board of directors provides financial protection for all staff to prevent financial sacrifice or legal liabilities when executing duties for the Museum.

The Museum recognizes that diversity is a significant force within its own social fabric and in the community and encourages employment opportunities and accessibility at the Flag House for all people.

### **Fundraising Practices**

Fundraising is vital to the financial health of the Flag House. Staff and members of the board of directors involved in soliciting funding, other contributions, or gifts-in-kind on behalf of the Flag House, must do so with honesty as to the need for such contributions and must use donations only for the intended purposes. Gifts should be solicited without the promise of advantages not offered to all donors. All records and documents acquired during fundraising efforts should remain confidential and intact.

### **Inter-institutional Cooperation**

The Flag House welcomes cooperative partnerships with organizations for programming services, advocacy, and community outreach in order to adhere to organizational mission.

## **V. STAFF**

### **Staff Responsibilities, General**

The Flag House Association's board of directors promotes a working environment that values integrity, respect, inclusiveness, and diversity. All staff work to advance the Flag House's mission. Staff members include those who are employed by the Museum on a full-time, part-time, and seasonal basis. All staff members are responsible for understanding the duties of their positions and executing those duties to the best of their abilities. Open communication among staff is welcomed and highly valued.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Staff should never abuse their official positions or their contacts within the museum community, compete with the Flag House, or bring discredit or embarrassment to the Flag House or to their profession in any activity, museum-related or not. They should be prepared to accept the restrictions that are necessary to maintain public confidence in museums and in the museum profession. The terms and restrictions listed here, the terms and restrictions listed here will be accepted by all staff, interns and volunteers working with the Flag House.

## **Gifts, Favors, Discounts, Dispensations**

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House is committed to the highest ethical principles in all relationships with business suppliers. Any Museum staff member who is authorized to spend Museum funds should do so with impartiality, honesty, and with regard only to the best interests of the Flag House.

Staff and others in a close relationship to them must not accept gifts, favors, loans, or other dispensations or things of more than minimal value that are available to them in connection with their duties for the Museum. Gifts of minimal value are deemed to be those novelty items with advertising identification affixed to them and a value of less than \$50. Gifts include discounts on personal purchases from suppliers who sell items or furnish services to the Flag House, except where such discounts are regularly offered to the general public.

Gifts can also include offers of outside employment or other advantageous arrangements.

Flag House staff should not accept meals, accommodations and travel services while on official business, except when it is clear that acceptance of such services will not compromise the professional judgment of the staff member or the reputation of the Museum.

## **Responsibility to Museum Property, Real and Intangible**

No staff member should use, outside museum premises or, for personal gain, any object or item that is a part of the Flag House's collection or under the guardianship of the museum, or use any other property, supplies or resources of the museum, except for the official business of the Flag House. The name and reputation of the Flag House are valuable assets and should not be exploited either for personal advantage or the advantage of any other person or entity. Staff members are responsible for maintaining the security of confidential records and information, and the privacy of individuals or groups who support the Flag House.

## **Responsibility to the Collection**

Members of the Flag House staff cannot acquire deaccessioned objects from the collections that are owned by or on loan to the museum.

## **Programming and Interpretation**

Interpretation and publications reflect thorough research and scholarship. Programs support the mission of the Flag House and reflect the cultural and historical context of the subject matter and recognize the potential for multiple interpretations. Discussion and debate of historical interpretation is encouraged and supported. The Flag House and its educational staff will demonstrate consistent and high-quality work in its programmatic activities and will actively include appropriate scholarship in programs, exhibits, and interpretive planning. Educational staff will, from time to time, assess the effectiveness of its interpretive activities through evaluations and use the results to plan and improve future programs. Potentially destructive use of collections as part of programs, and/or interpretation is prohibited and will involve only collections designated as

“Educational for-use” in accordance with the Flag House’s established collections management policy.

## **VI. The Collections**

### **Collections Mission Statement**

It is the policy of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House to collect those artifacts, archival materials, publications and other materials that date to the period in which Mary Pickersgill resided in the historic Flag House (1807-1857), the Young-Pickersgill family, and other representative materials that enrich the experience of museum visitors with the history of the flag and events surrounding the War of 1812. Collecting shall further be limited by the Museum’s ability to provide proper care and maintenance for its collections and shall focus on the needs of the Museum’s interpretive programs.

### **Acquisitions**

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House shall acquire object(s) through gifts, bequests, exchange, purchase, field collecting, excavations and abandonment. No materials shall be acquired knowingly or willingly which have been collected illegally in or imported into the United States contrary to state or federal law, regulation, treaty or convention.

### **Title/Rights**

The Museum shall obtain legal title to all gifts, purchases or trades free and clear, without restrictions as to the use or further disposition of the object(s). Upon acceptance of the gift, bequest or transfer of ownership of an object to the Museum, full property rights, literary rights, copyright, trademark and any other related interest become the property of the Museum for its use, duplication or publication. Records created to document these transactions shall be maintained in perpetuity by the Museum. No restrictions shall be allowed on gifts, purchases or trades unless very exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. Any acquisitions with restrictions must be approved in advance by the Collections Committee. If objects are accepted with any restrictions or limitations, the terms shall be clearly stated in the deed of gift, made part of the accession record for the object(s) and be strictly observed.

### **Appraisals**

Because the Museum is considered an interested party by the Internal Revenue Service, no staff member shall give appraisals or authentications to donors or prospective donors. Donors desiring to take an income tax deduction must obtain an appraisal from a disinterested independent appraiser at their own expense. Staff members may assist a donor in locating a qualified appraiser and shall encourage donors to arrange for an appraisal before the transfer of ownership takes place. Staff shall make artifacts available on an appointment basis for appraisers if a donor cannot have an appraisal completed before the transfer takes place. Museum staff shall only give opinions or suggestions in regard to objects brought to the Museum. They shall not authenticate, appraise or otherwise place a monetary value on any objects.



## **Deaccessioning and Disposal**

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House recognizes that from time to time, the Museum may assess its collections, and because of such factors as changing needs, policies, or physical condition, may dispose of collection items for which they have no foreseeable use. As long as an object or archival material continues to be within the scope and the collecting policy of the Museum and relevant and useful to that end, it shall be retained and maintained by the Museum. However, the item(s) may be deaccessioned if it: 1) is no longer relevant to the Museum's mission and collecting scope 2) duplicates material in the collection 3) cannot be properly stored or preserved by the Museum or 4) has deteriorated beyond repair. An object may not be deaccessioned by the Museum if it has been acquired by the Museum within the past five years.

Objects that are being considered for deaccession to become part of a hands-on living collection that will serve the Flag House's educational programming only need to be voted upon by the Collections Committee. Objects that are being deaccessioned for the purpose of sale will first be presented to the Collections Committee and will need to pass a vote of the full board of directors. Under no circumstances shall members of the staff (including volunteers), the board of directors, the Collections Committee or members of their families acquire directly or indirectly any items disposed of by the Museum. All proceeds obtained from the disposition of an item shall be restricted to a special Collections Fund to be used only for the purchase of other objects.

## **ACCESS AND DISCLOSURE**

Access to the collections and records associated with the records shall be non-discriminatory. However, due to safety and security considerations, access shall be under controlled conditions at all times. All records, except those pertaining to donors, shall be open to the public on an appointment basis. A copy of the Museum's collections policy shall be made available upon request. Excerpts of the policy appear on the reverse of the "Deed of Gift" form. All reasonable inquiries regarding the collections, records, or Museum policies and procedures shall be answered promptly. A list of major donors shall be published yearly in the Museum's newsletter or other Annual Report. A list of all objects which have been deaccessioned from the permanent collections of the Museum shall be kept current by the Executive Director and may be made available in response to any reasonable inquiry.

## **VII. PROMULGATION**

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc.'s Code of Ethics was adapted from the American Association of Museums (AAM) Code of Ethics, 2000, [Code of Ethics for Museums](#). It is a living document, designed to be disseminated, used and updated. This Code of Ethics will be:

- Incorporated into board of directors Rights and Responsibilities packet.
- Reviewed at the new board of directors' orientation.
- Disseminated to all staff and volunteers.