

Donating to the Union Pacific Railroad Historical Collection at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum

The Union Pacific Historical Collection

The Union Pacific Historical Collection was established upon the discovery of the silver service from Abraham Lincoln's funeral car in a Union Pacific vault in 1920. At that moment, Union Pacific leadership realized that the railroad, established in 1862, had both a role and a responsibility to American history to preserve the legacy of this great company. Since that time, the Union Pacific Historical collection continues to grow from both outside donations and transfers from within Union Pacific.

The Collection is housed and managed by staff at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum and available for use in exhibits and outreach as well as research.

Every year, many artifacts, books, and archival materials are added to the Union Pacific Railroad's Historical Collection through the generosity of individuals and organizations. These donations enrich the Union Pacific Collection and its value to researchers and to preserving railroad history.

Collections Policy

The Union Pacific Railroad Museum will accept original items which reflect the history of Union Pacific (or subsidiary railroads). Most items received into the collection are of historic and/or artistic merit, and are used for the purposes of display, comparison, research, preservation, or to upgrade the quality and/or condition of the collections.

Only artifacts with demonstrated authenticity, established provenance and clear issues of title will be accepted by the Museum. Please note that it is our general policy to refuse donations upon which restrictions have been placed.

Information for Potential Donors

Due to the great volume of offers we receive each year, the Union Pacific Railroad Museum cannot accept donated material through the mail, or dropped at the front desk, without prior communication. If you have artifacts, footage, photographs or archival material that you believe would complement the Union Pacific Collection, please send an e-mail or letter explaining the item and its significance. Please include images and any pertinent background information.

Inquiries and information regarding potential donations should be directed to:

Patricia LaBounty
Curator
Union Pacific Railroad Museum
200 Pearl Street
Council Bluffs, IA 51503
(402)501-3841
Fax: (712) 323-4973
plabount@up.com

Frequently Asked Donation Questions

Will the Museum appraise my donation for its monetary value?

Due to regulations and policies issued by the Internal Revenue Service, the Museum cannot provide monetary appraisals of items offered for donation (or for any other purpose).

However, professional appraisers do perform this service for a fee. To find a licensed appraiser in your area, we recommend potential donors to contact the American Society of Appraisers, the International Society of Appraisers or the Appraisers Association of America for a referral.

Can I take a tax deduction for my donation?

Please note that the Union Pacific Historical Collection is privately owned by Union Pacific and donations to the collection are not eligible for tax deductions.

How are potential donations reviewed?

Donation offers are reviewed by the Museum staff. The staff is knowledgeable in the scope of our existing collection, as well as various issues associated with the long-term care of artifacts.

The staff uses the criteria outlined in the Collections Policy as a guide. We also take into consideration the condition of the object and the availability of resources required to properly store and care for the item. The sensitive nature of materials or ownership of copyrights may also factor into acquisition decisions.

Can I mail or drop off a donation?

The Museum cannot accept unsolicited donations through the mail or in person without prior written communication.

Does the Museum accept long-term loans?

The Museum does not accept items from individuals on long-term loan.

Will the Museum exhibit the artifacts or documents in my donation?

The Museum cannot guarantee that any objects donated to its collection will be exhibited unless expressly collected for that purpose. Only a fraction of the collection is on view at any given time.

However, the Museum does allocate a significant portion of its annual budget to maintaining optimal conditions in its storage areas and galleries to ensure the long-term preservation of all collection materials.

Objects from the collection are occasionally loaned to other institutions for temporary exhibitions.

If I donate artifacts or documents to the Museum, will they be returned to me at my request?

The Museum cannot return accessioned collection materials to the donor. Once the Museum accepts your donation for the collection, you will be asked to sign a Deed of Gift, which legally transfers ownership of the materials to the Museum.