

Scope of Collections

Historic Stranahan House Museum collects objects which are useful for fulfilling the museum's mission to interpret the life, character and times of Frank and Ivy Stranahan and the community they helped to found. The centerpiece of the museum's collections is the house itself, which serves as a model of exemplary historic preservation.

The Permanent Collection consists of furniture, furnishings, housewares, books, photographs, paintings, textiles, clothing and accessories, glass, ceramics, silver and other metals, and period decorative arts relating to the history of the Stranahans, their home and their relationship to the city of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County.

History of the Collections

Most of the furnishings owned by the Stranahans had been disposed of by Mrs. Stranahan prior to her death in 1971. The furnishings that remained in the house, as well as a few of Mrs. Stranahan's personal belongings and all of her personal papers were bequeathed by Mrs. Stranahan to the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society. When the house was opened as a museum in 1984, the Historical Society loaned Stranahan House, Inc., some of the Stranahan furnishings and belongings from its collections. Those objects remain on loan and in Stranahan House, Inc.'s possession. Additionally, a number of Stranahan family members, friends and business associates donated items previously owned by the Stranahans to Stranahan House, Inc. These two sources form the backbone of the museum's exhibitions and are the most important pieces at the Museum.

In order to fully furnish the house, several hundred objects determined to be period authentic were brought into the collection in 1984-1986, most through donation and some by purchase. All the objects collected to this date were accessioned.

In 1986, the museum accepted a special collection known as the Knox Collection. This consisted of about 1,000 small items (jewelry, purses, medals, buttons, cardcases, pipes, eyeglasses, hatpins, etc.) that were determined to be from the turn of the century. Although these objects were in keeping with the time period interpreted by the museum, they did not necessarily fit the Museum's other collecting criteria. The Museum made use of these items in the 1990s through temporary exhibits tied to adult education classes not related to Stranahan history, such as a class on Victorian jewelry or antique hatpins. The objects in this collection have not been fully accessioned or catalogued.

In the 1990s and later, collecting practices and record keeping were not as diligent as in the first years of the Museum's history. Objects came into the Museum's possession either without proper documentation or with documentation that has since been lost, and several of these objects have since been determined to be from time periods other than the time period interpreted at Stranahan House. Also, several objects that had been registered are no longer in the Museum's possession and there is no documentation as to how or why these objects were removed and disposed.

In 2000, Stranahan House underwent a second refurbishment. Administrative offices were moved out of the Museum, and several rooms, including the kitchen, were turned into exhibit space. A kitchen furnishing plan was developed. Some of the smaller items in the kitchen were donated and the larger pieces were purchased from antique stores; the other rooms were furnished through purchases and donations. A few records concerning these objects exist, but there is no indication that the objects were accessioned or catalogued.

Categories of Collections

Permanent Collection – Museum objects that are important to the interpretation of Stranahan House, have been accessioned and receive the highest level of care. The Permanent Collection includes the following sub-classifications:

Stranahan Collection: Museum objects that belonged to the Stranahans and are now owned by Stranahan House, Inc. (Does not include objects on loan from the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society. See Appendix A)

Period Collection: Museum objects that are from the period interpreted at Stranahan House, but were not owned by the family.

Archival Collection – Primarily photographic and paper material, including the following sub-classifications:

Document Collection: Includes papers related to Stranahan House's architecture and to the history of the organization such as newsletters, minutes of meetings, reports and newspaper articles.

Photograph Collection: Includes original photographs taken after 1979 related to Stranahan House's architecture and to the history of the organization as well as copies of historical photographs of the same.

Secondary Collections: Objects in these collections have not been accessioned or fully accessioned and do not require the same level of care as the objects in the Permanent Collection. They include the following sub-classifications:

Knox Collection: Special collection of objects, mostly curiosities and personal items such as jewelry, buttons, fans, stones etc.

Education Collection: Objects that have educational value and may be handled by children and adult visitors and are permitted to be taken offsite.

Book Collection: Books that are used for display and research by staff and volunteers.

Display Collection: Objects that are used as props for display purposes and do not have any particular historical value.

Christmas Collection: A large collection of Christmas ornaments and decorations, the bulk of which was bequeathed to Stranahan House by the estate of Mary Porter of Fort Lauderdale.