

Wisconsin Veterans Museum Donation Information

Why We Collect

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum collects to preserve and share stories of Wisconsin Veterans from the Civil War to the present. As museums have limited resources to care for collections, we must be selective when adding items to the permanent collection. There are over 330,000 veterans living in Wisconsin, and many more have served, so the museum already has many examples of items that were regularly issued. While everything belonging to a veteran is special, we focus on collecting things that help us tell their unique stories.

What We Are Collecting

We are always looking for the following types of items from veterans who were born in Wisconsin OR who joined the military in Wisconsin OR who lived in Wisconsin for at least five years:

- Letters, diaries, journals, and scrapbooks from the veteran's time in service
- Photographs of the veteran or that the veteran took during service
- Military records and papers that relate to the veteran's service
- Training manuals and guides
- Work uniforms of later eras, especially 1980s to the present
- Personal items and souvenirs associated with a specific story
- Anything handmade or customized by the veteran
- Dog tags
- Purple Hearts and valor awards

What We Are Less Interested In Collecting

We will not accept items from a veteran who does not have a Wisconsin connection. In addition, the following items are well represented in our collection, and we will decline them unless there is a unique story associated with them:

- Dress uniforms from World War I and World War II
- Medals from World War I and World War II, except for Purple Hearts and valor awards
- Footlockers and trunks
- German souvenirs from World War I including insignia, patches, medals, and currency
- German (Nazi) and Japanese souvenirs from World War II including insignia, patches, medals, currency, flags, and arm bands

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Donation Process

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has a formal process for evaluating donation offers. Items will be accepted on a temporary basis and held by the museum so that the collection committee can review them for addition to the permanent or education collections. Items are reviewed individually, and donations may be accepted in whole, in part, or declined. Once a decision is made, the registrar will send a certificate of donation that must be signed before the donation can be completed. The registrar will also arrange for the return of items not needed by the museum. The donation process usually takes four to six months but may take up to one year.

Caring for Donations

Once a donation is complete, the material belongs to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and will be processed into the permanent collection, education collection, or library. Museum staff will then preserve and care for the items. Items may be photographed, labeled, cleaned, stabilized, and digitized. Historical items may also be removed from frames, sleeves, boxes, or other contemporary holders for safekeeping. Frames, binders, boxes, sleeves etc. will not be returned.

Once donations are processed into the collection, they will initially be placed in secure, environmentally controlled collections storage for long term preservation. Collections staff will often make these items accessible through our online collection portal and donors, family members, researchers, and the public may view items in storage by making an appointment. There is no guarantee that donated items will go on exhibit.



If you have questions for our collections team, please email veterans.museum@dva.wisconsin.gov and we will answer your questions as soon as possible. Thank you.