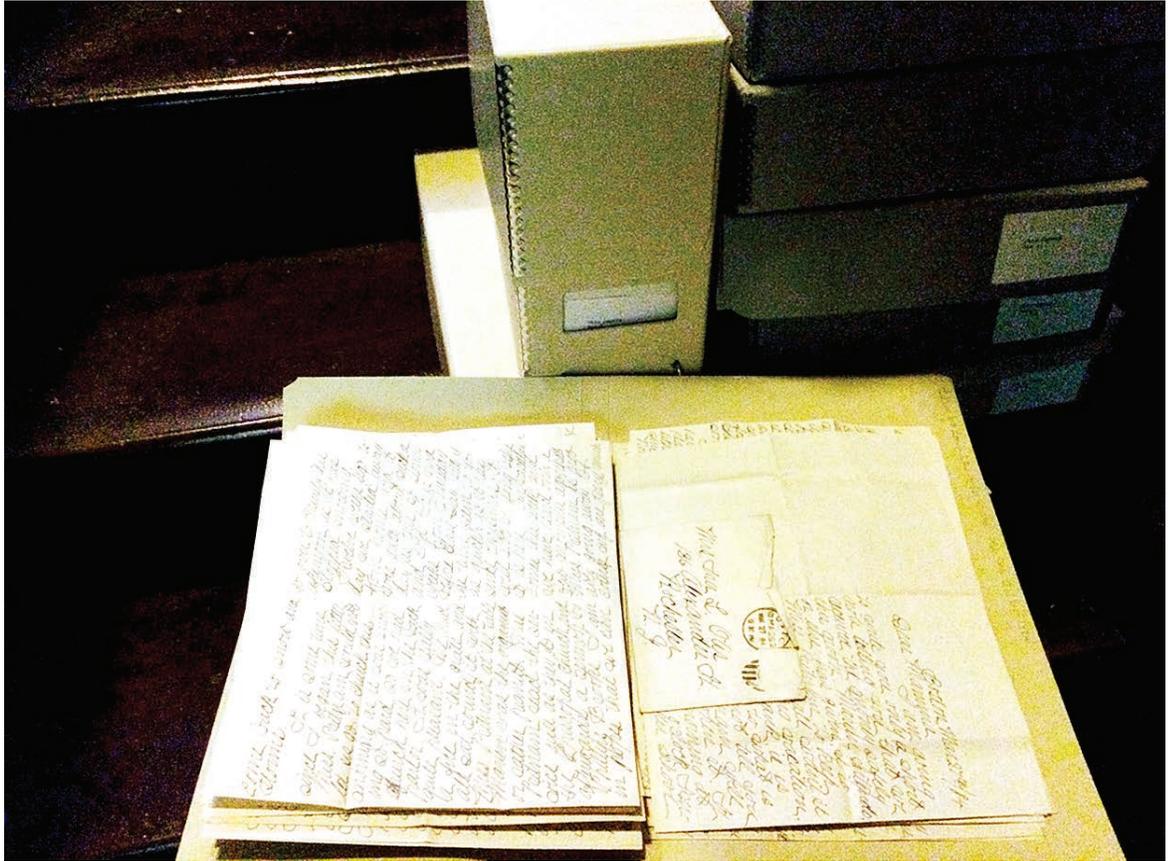


Deaccessioned

by Lynne Belluscio

We were notified a few months ago that the Strong Museum was willing to deaccession some archival material that was pertinent to Ingham University. They contacted us and we were elated to know that they would be giving us the Otis Family collections. There are 12 boxes and box #1 includes letters between Mary Ann Raymond and her daughters Mary and Charlotte and the teachers of the LeRoy Female Seminary in 1849-1851 and 1861. Last week I was able to go to the Strong Museum to pick up the boxes and this week they will be put into our archives. When I have some free time, I will be able to sit down and read the letters. Some of them have been transcribed.



Here is a short section from a letter Mary wrote to her sister Lottie: *“LeRoy Intellectual Prison – June 18 (1851) Mrs. Staunton has forbidden the wearing of short sleeves in the seminary. She says that if she sees a young lady with short sleeves on she shall send her to her room and keep her there until she gets some long ones. She will not bear the responsibility of their health if they wear them. I wish Mother would send word to her that she would be responsible for me and that I might wear them.”*

From a letter written June 19, 1851: *“They do not have anything at all (in LeRoy on) the Fourth, only a Sons of Temperance celebration and they form a procession, the fire company first, then the Sons, then the Seminary girls and then the villagers. They march all around the streets and then up to the grove and have some orations and a table – Lovely I must say – and when they see us walking they say there goes the cattle show and I should think they would, for when we walk we go so fast – – – I suppose they are afraid we will be contaminated if we do not move as though we had been shot or expected to be every minute – I expect I shall need an-*

other pair of shoes by the Fourth. My ten- shilling shoes are almost gone. Some of the girls have worn out one pair and are on their second now and no wonder. The other day I thought I would count up the number of times that we go up and down stairs a day and it will average thirty times. I guess you could not stand it very well and then we walk about five miles a day, besides our exercises. Oh dear, it is so pleasant. I keep looking out of my window and wishing I was at home. The pleasant weather makes me feel a great deal more homesick than the dark dismal days.”

In order for the Strong Museum to deaccession these letters, they had to follow a precise procedure. Deaccession is a word that screws up my spell check, and it may be a word that is only found in a museum dictionary. It is the opposite of accessioned - which does pass spell check.

When an object is accessioned into a museum collection, it legally becomes part of the collection. It can be a gift, or it can be a purchase. If it is a gift, the state requires that a “deed of gift” has to be signed by the donor. That indicates that the donor is the legal owner of the object and has

the legal right to give it to the museum. The donor also can use the deed of gift as a receipt for tax purposes.

Once an object is accessioned into the collection, the only way it can leave the collection is to be “deaccessioned.” There are several reasons an object might be deaccessioned. It might not be appropriate for the museum - - it may not meet the mission of the museum or it may not be within the scope of what the museum collects. That is why the Strong decided to deaccession these letters.

The state requires that museums report the objects to be

deaccessioned to the State Attorney General’s Office, and the objects have to be listed on the annual report given to the New York State Education Department, Board of Regents. (If objects are sold or auctioned, the value of the deaccessioned objects has to be reported. And it is state law that the money can only be used to #1 purchase new objects or #2 care or restoration of objects.)

We are very thankful that the Strong went through the process to deaccession these letters. They are a welcome addition to our collection and the story of Ingham University.

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