

Preserving Family Photos



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PHOTO PRESERVATION

- Once photos begin to deteriorate, there is little that can be done at home.
- Handle with care. Oils from your fingers leave residues on photographs. Try to wear gloves when handling old photographs.
- Simple cleaning of photos can be done to remove surface dirt. NEVER use water! You must use special cleaners.
- DO NOT store photographs in the basement or attic.
- If photos do become water damaged: Place in an air-conditioned room below 65 degrees. Carefully separate items and place them on a flat surface between layers of cheese cloth or linen. DO NOT USE PAPER TOWELS! Place heavy object on top of cloth to avoid curling.
- Keep images in temperature and humidity controlled environments. You cannot reverse the damage that has already been done, but you can halt or slow down continued deterioration.
- Limit light exposure. Do not expose these images to direct sunlight or lamplight for extended periods of time.
- Use florescent lightbulbs instead of incandescent bulbs, they radiate less heat.
- Use copies of photographs (if possible) instead of originals.
- If a negative still exists it can be copied any place film is developed.
- Scan photographs as TIFF or RAW files at a minimum of 600 dpi (use the highest resolution your computer can handle).
- Save images to a back-up system like CDs or External hard drives. USB sticks are not long term storage and should be used to transfer images only.

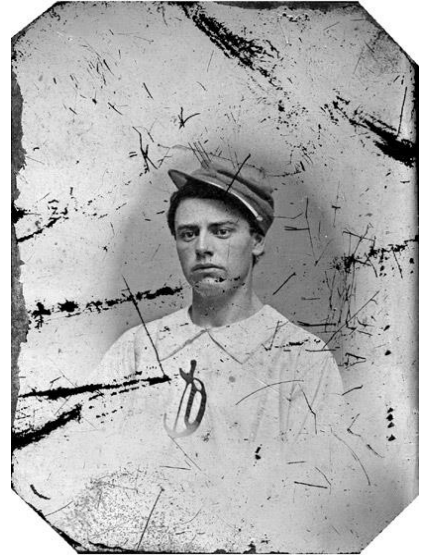


PHOTO STORAGE

- Photos should be stored in a location between 65-70 degrees with a relative humidity of 45-50% (example: first floor interior closet).
- Store photos in photo storage boxes or clamshell albums if available.
- Use containers that are buffered and are acid & lignin free.
- Always store black and white photos separate from color photos.
- Store photos upright not flat.
- Store negatives in a separate location from prints.
- Do not use rubber bands or paper clips on any type of photos.
- Do not use tape or glue of any kind on photos-- always use photo corners or sleeves.
- Do not keep photos in the cardboard or paper envelopes they came in or any type of unidentified plastic containers.



SCRAPBOOKING DOS AND DON'TS

Scrapbooking is not a recent phenomenon; it has been around for centuries. Modern scrapbooking varies from previous incarnations in the fact that we are much more concerned with quality of products and preservation for future generations.

- Do read the labels! Not all products are alike.
- Do order products from reputable vendors. Just because a product claims “archival quality” or “photo-safe” does not mean it is. Many products may be safe NOW, but not in the future.
- Do be aware that embellishments like buttons, stickers, tags and ribbons may react with paper and photos over time, causing the materials to degrade and become discolored or brittle.



- DO NOT use magnetic albums, even those that claim to be archival quality or acid free! The paper yellows quickly and the chemicals in the glue eat away at any photographs or documents placed on the page. Many items also adhere permanently to the page over time, causing serious damage when removed.
- Do use archival quality page protectors to keep pages from rubbing together especially if you are using raised embellishments.
- Do use copies of documents and photos and not originals, especially if you are going to crop or change the item in any way.

HISTORIC SCRAPBOOKS

- Store small to medium sized albums upright.
- Larger scrapbooks or books that are bulging or have loose items can be stored flat, only non-bulging albums can be stacked on top of each other, but no more than 2 high. The pressure can cause damage to bindings and to photographs.
- If pages are brittle or breaking, tie the scrapbook closed with linen or white cotton fabric tape. Just be sure that the tape is not rubbing against the pages causing further damage.
- Do not repair historic scrapbooks with tape or any other types of adhesives. Use photo corners to put photos and papers back into place.
- Do not begin to disassemble a scrapbook until you know if it is too fragile to take apart and replace in a new acid-free album. Instead, place acid-free paper or Mylar/polyester page protectors between the pages. This adds bulk, but keeps acid migration to a minimum.
- Albums that are severely deteriorated or damaged should be stored in acid-free storage boxes.
- Photocopy newspaper clippings or other yellowing or brittle papers onto acid-free paper and replace in the album (Do not remove the clippings if they are too brittle and may break if you remove them).
- Make 2 photocopies of papers, documents and clippings. One for the scrapbook and one for your files. Be sure to store the original in an acid-free folder or envelope to protect it from further damage.
- Remove as many paperclips, rubber bands and staples that you can without damaging the pages and replace them with photo corners or brass paperclips.
- Scan or take pictures of historic albums before you disassemble them, to preserve its historical significance.



FURTHER READING

- ❖ Eakle, Arlene H. *Photograph Analysis*. Family History World. Salt Lake City, UT. 1976.
- ❖ Eastman Kodak Co. *Conservation of Photographs*. Eastman Kodak Co. Rochester, N.Y. 1985.
- ❖ Family Chronical. *Dating Old Photographs 1840-1929*. Lewiston, N.Y. Family Chronicle. 2000.
- ❖ Frisch-Ripley, Karen. *Unlocking the Secrets in Old Photographs*. Ancestry. Salt Lake City, UT. 2001.
- ❖ Lee, Zack. *40 Digital Photo Retouching Techniques*. 2003.
- ❖ Long, Jane S. and Richard W. Long. *Caring for Your Family Treasures*. Abrams Inc. N.Y. N.Y. 2000.
- ❖ Niemetzky, Gerard. *Photo Retouching with Photoshop*. O'Reilly Press. 2005.
- ❖ Storey, Neil R. *Military Photographs and how to Date Them*. Berkshire. Countryside Books. 2009.
- ❖ Sturdevant, Katherine Scott. *Organizing & Preserving Your Family Heirlooms*. Better Way Books. Cincinnati, OH. 2002.
- ❖ Taylor, Maureen A. *Uncovering Your Ancestry Through Family Photographs*. 2nd Edition. Family Tree Books. Cincinnati, OH. 2005.
- ❖ Taylor, Maureen A. *Preserving Your Family Photographs*. Betterway books. Cincinnati, OH. 2003.
- ❖ Tuttle, Craig A. *An Ounce of Preservation*. Rainbow Books. Highland City, FL. 1995.
- ❖ Webb, Martha Ellen. *How to clean, repair, store, and display your heirloom papers and photographs*. Omaha, NE. Making History. 1999.



WEBSITES

PRESERVATION

- ❖ Scrapbook Preservation Society:
<http://www.scrapbookpreservationsociety.com/>
- ❖ Image Permanence Institute: <http://www.imagepermaneinstitute.org/index.html>
- ❖ Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/preserv>
- ❖ American national Standards Institute: <http://www.ansi.org>
- ❖ Northeast Document Conservation Center: <http://www.nedcc.org>
- ❖ Family Tree Magazine: <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/articles/aug05/preserving.asp>
- ❖ Archival Company: <http://www.universityproducts.com/main2.html>
- ❖ Light Impressions Archival Supplies:
<http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com/servlet/OnlineShopping>

PHOTOGRAPHS

- ❖ Dead Fred: <http://www.deadfred.com>
- ❖ Ford & Nagle: <http://www.fordnagle.com>
- ❖ Adopt-a-Photo: <http://www.adoptaphoto.com>

TRADE CATALOGS ONLINE

- ❖ Internet Archive Clothing and Dress Catalogs:
<http://archive.org/search.php?query=clothing%20CATALOG%20AND%20subject%3A%22Clothing%20and%20dress--Catalogs%22>
- ❖ Internet Archive Furniture and Design Catalogs:
<http://archive.org/search.php?query=furniture%20%20CATALOG%20AND%20subject%3A%22Furniture%20--%20Catalogs%22>

