



Little White School Museum

Preserving your Family Heirlooms and Treasures

Thursday, April 21, 2011

Properly sorting and carefully storing our family heirlooms is a little like the procedure we go through packing away holiday ornaments at the end of the season. The more carefully we do it, the more time we take to carefully order storage, the easier it is come the next holiday when we want to use them.

But the temptation is always there to just chuck things into the boxes and get the job finished. Unfortunately, speed is seldom our friend when it comes to such things, and particularly when dealing with family heirlooms and their attached memories.

Some treasures lend themselves to being used, despite their emotional value. Others lend themselves to being carefully stored in cabinets for exhibit and enjoyment by friends and family. Others are so fragile or valuable that they ought to be stored away unless taken out for a special occasion.

Here are some tips on proper handling, care, and storage of some of the more common types of family heirlooms:

An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure...

When it comes to preserving your family treasures, you should always pay heed to these watchwords:

1. First, do nothing that cannot be undone without harm to the item. That means using the least-harmful methods of cleaning, handling, displaying, and storing your treasures. It is possible to protect items without using techniques that could destroy the very things we seek to save. That means laminating or decoupage paper items should never be an option, and that storage spaces should be found in your house that are the least harmful.

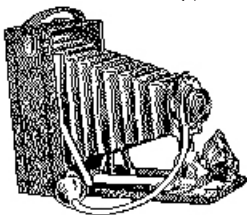
2. Second, just as the medical profession finds it easier and better for patients to prevent disease instead of curing it after it breaks out, so too should preventative care of family treasures be the constant goal.

In practical terms, this means assessing each object and addressing its needs because different objects require different handling. For instance, ceramic items are far more forgiving of wet, dry, cold, or hot conditions than organic items such as photographs, documents, and textiles.

Here are a few practical tips:

Photographic prints and slides...

1. Store prints and slides in a cool, dry place with a minimum of light.



2. Store in acid free—never magnetic or self-adhesive—sleeves.

Once in sleeves, they can be stored in three-ring binders.

3. Display copies of heirloom photographs while keeping originals

safely stored. Inexpensive scanners and inkjet printers can be used to safely duplicate photographs.

4. Store photographs and negatives in envelopes or folders made of polypropylene, polyester, or acid free paper and file them loosely in acid-free boxes.

5. Protect slides in stable polyester sleeves.

6. Store photographs and negatives away from contact with brown wrapping paper, glassine envelopes, non acid-free mounting board, rubber cement, adhesive tape, or glue.

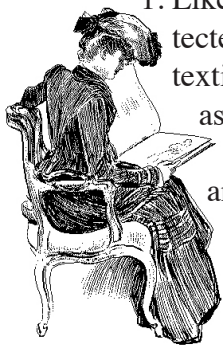
7. Be alert for any problems involving excess moisture or the presence of rodent or insect pests.

8. Avoid touching photos, negatives, and slides; handle them by the edges only.

9. If you must display original photos, make sure they're behind ultraviolet filtering glazing, and use acid-free mats.

10. Take the time to date your photos and identify the people in them. Your descendants will thank you.

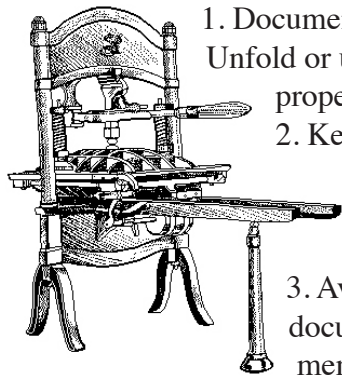
Textiles...



1. Like with photographs, sun and unprotected fluorescent light is the enemy of textiles. Keep them out of both as much as possible.
2. Store textiles where temperature and humidity is relatively constant.
3. If you must wear antique textiles be very careful of spills, and don't use makeup or antiperspirants.
4. Store folded textiles in acid-free boxes with unbuffered tissue or white sheeting between layers.

5. Inspect stored textiles regularly; do not store with pesticides or mothballs.
6. If textiles are hung, use well-padded plastic, not wooden, hangers that are as wide as the garment's shoulders.
7. Sturdy fabrics may be cleaned by vacuuming on low suction with the brush attachment covered with cotton cheesecloth.
8. For wedding dress preservation, see the accompanying handout from the Minnesota Historical Society.

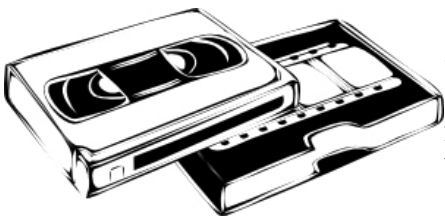
Documents...



1. Documents should be stored flat. Unfold or unroll them, and store in properly sized acid-free folders.
2. Keep heirloom documents out of sunlight and away from unprotected fluorescent light.
3. Avoid displaying original documents. Instead, scan documents and print using an inkjet printer. Then safely store the original and display the copy.
4. If original items are to be displayed, use ultraviolet-filtering glazing to cover the front and make sure

- they're either mounted on or backed by acid-free mounting board.
5. Store acid-free folders and their heirloom documents in acid-free boxes or in file cabinet drawers.
6. The best storage areas are temperature and humidity-controlled, with temperatures and humidity maintained at constant, moderate levels.
7. In general, newspaper clippings are not recommended for storage. Instead, scan the clippings and either print them or store the electronic files (see last page).
8. Products are available to remove acid from newspaper clippings by soaking them, but the process is complicated and there's always a chance the originals will be damaged.

Video and audio tapes...



1. Valuable video and audio tapes should be transferred to more durable storage formats, such as DVD discs.
2. Make at least two copies of family video and audio tapes. Store one copy of each in a safe, proper storage location and use only as a master for re-recording or copying to another media.
3. Keep tapes in cool, dry, dust-free areas, away from direct sunlight and well away from anything with a magnetic field, including audio speakers.
4. Keep your playback devices clean and in good repair. Use dust covers to protect them when they're not in use.
5. Never touch the surface of video or audio tapes;

- hold them by the edges, and make sure they're re-wound properly.
6. Rewind tapes as soon after playing as possible, and then remove them from the tape deck or player as soon as possible and put them in proper storage.
7. Make sure to use high-quality tapes for any important video or audio recordings.
8. Likewise, use archival-quality DVD or CD media for important recordings or recordings made for archival purposes from existing video or audio tapes.
8. Make sure to break off the tab on all important video and audio tapes to assure they will not be accidentally taped over.



Newspaper clippings...

If you feel you must save newspaper clippings, you will need to de-acidify them. Here's a method that has been tried and is said to work: Make a solution of two tablespoons of milk of magnesia and one quart of club soda. Then refrigerate it for eight hours. Next, put the mixture in a shallow non-aluminum pan wide enough to hold the largest clipping. Lay one clipping at a time

in the liquid and let it soak for an hour. When the time is up, remove the clipping and place it between several layers of paper towels to remove the excess moisture. Then air-dry thoroughly on a clean flat surface. Place a piece of fiberglass screen (door/window screen) under the clippings so they will not stick to the flat surface.

Resources

Reference books and web sites:

Caring for Your Family Treasures: A Concise Guide to Caring for Your Cherished Belongings by Jane S. Long and Richard W. Long; Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 2000.

Preserve Your Family Treasures at <http://www.mnhs.org/people/mnngg/stories/> — web site of the Minnesota History Center, 345 Kellogg Blvd W., Saint Paul, MN 55102-1903. Phone 651-259-3000, 800-657-3773. Includes advice from conservators on preserving family heirlooms.

Tips for Preserving Your Family Heirlooms at <http://www.greyroots.com/collections-research/tips-for-preserving-your-family-heirlooms/> — web site of the Grey Roots Museum and Archives. Includes many valuable links for preserving specific kinds of heirlooms.

Storage materials, advice:

Hollinger Metal Edge, 9401 Northeast Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22408. Phone: 800-634-0491. Fax: 800-947-8814. Web site: <http://www.hollingermetaledge.com/> — Acid-free storage boxes, folders, envelopes.

Gaylord Brothers, P.O. Box 4901, Syracuse, NY 13221-4901. Phone: 1-800-962-9580; Fax: 1-800-272-3412. Web site: <http://www.gaylord.com/> — Acid-free archival quality storage materials and equipment.

University Products Inc., 517 Main Street, Holyoke, MA 01040. Toll-Free Sales: 1.800.628.1912; Toll-Free Fax Sales: 1.800.532.9281. Web site: <http://www.universityproducts.com/> — Archival supplies and photo preservation materials.

Light Impressions, P.O. Box 2100, Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670. Call Toll Free: 1-800-828-6216. Web site: <http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com/> — Specialize in archival photo storage, display, and preservation products.

PRAIRIEFEST QUILT SHOW

Presented by

Quilters Dozen Hand Quilting Group

June 17,18,19

Little White School Museum, Oswego, Ill.

Quilts old and new from the community will be on display

Quilt raffle will be held on Sunday June 19

Certified quilt appraiser Sue Harmon will be available
on Friday and Saturday June 18 and 19 for quilt appraisals

Why should I have my Quilt Appraised?

- ☛ To establish a replacement value for insurance purposes
- ☛ To determine a value for donation, gifts or estate purposes
- ☛ To provide adequate coverage during shipping or while in transit
- ☛ To aid in determining fair market value.
- ☛ A meaningful addition to a quilt given as a gift

An appraisal will consist of a formally written report, including a complete and accurate description of the quilt, a defined value and the purpose of the appraisal (is it for fair market value, insurance, or tax donation). It should also have the signature of the appraiser. Appraisals should not be done from photos only. A physical examination of each quilt is key to an accurate appraisal..

Records should be kept with a photo of the quilt and any receipts that you may have to show the cost of the fabric etc used in the making of the quilt if newly made.

Most insurance companies do not realize the full value of the quilts we have worked so hard to create or the quilts we have inherited and will only offer a replacement cost for your “blanket” which can be as little as 50.00.

An appraisal will help to determine the value of your quilts.

Check with your insurance agent to see if your homeowners insurance will cover quilts and other items considered collectibles. Some may require a rider to your policy.

Sue Harmon, Certified Quilt Appraiser, will be available on a first come first serve basis on June 17 and 18 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information on the PrairieFest Quilt Show, quilt raffle and quilt appraisals, contact Sandy Dickinson, 630-892-8755 or Sue Matile, 630-554-8743

See these Web sites for more information:

- ☛ American Quilters Society: www.americanquilter.com
- ☛ American Society of Appraisers: www.appraisers.org
- ☛ Appraisers Association of America: www.appraisersassoc.org
- ☛ International Society of Appraisers: www.isa-appraisers.org