



Little White School Museum

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Safely Storing Family Letters

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The procedure for safely storing family letters is the same as that used to store any other documentary artifact. That is, they should be stored flat, in acid-free media.

At the Little White School Museum, when we get a collection of letters, we almost always sort them first in chronological order. They should then be removed from their envelopes and laid flat.

For most sizes of letters, storage is easiest in letter-sized archival-safe plastic letter-sized page sleeves, one page per sleeve. Store envelopes, depending on their size in the smallest sleeve you can get away with. Most of the envelopes mailed during World War II, for instance, can be stored in 5x7 photo sleeves, each sleeve holding two envelopes.

Keep the envelopes in order with their letters. If all envelopes fit in 5x7 sleeves, store one letter, then its envelope and the one for the following letter in a 5x7 sleeve, and then the next letter. Once they're stored in archival sleeves, a large number of letters can be kept in three-ring binders for easy access. Smaller collections can be stored in archival quality file folders, where the sleeves will allow them to be safely read and otherwise handled.

Inexpensive archivally-safe page protectors are available at Office Max and Office Depot. Make sure the box clearly states, archival quality.

Archivally-safe 5x7 and other sized photo storage sleeves, including sleeves sized especially for postcards, are available on-line through photo supply houses such as BCW Supplies, Gaylord.com, Light Impressions, and University Supplies.

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