

PRESERVING FAMILY PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW OF GENERAL GUIDELINES

TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Of all the things that a person can do to preserve papers and photographs, providing a good environment is the single most important. Such an environment includes a moderate temperature and relative humidity. Extreme variations in either can cause mold growth, cracks in pictures, premature aging and other damage. Although 68 degrees Fahrenheit and 30% relative humidity are frequently cited as being the targets for the ideal conditions, stability plays a major role in long term preservation, so it is better to have a stable temperature of perhaps 78 degrees Fahrenheit and a relative humidity of 30% than to have wild fluctuations in either.

LIGHT

Another environmental factor to consider is light. All light damages paper and photographs (particularly color photographs) so these items should be stored in a dark or dimly lit area whenever possible. Direct sunlight on valued materials must be avoided, because light (especially Ultraviolet light) causes severe irreversible damage very quickly, as witnessed by a newspaper that is left outside for only one day.

COLLECTION HOUSINGS

Storage materials and handling play key roles in preservation. Common cardboard boxes and file folders usually contain acids that contaminate historical materials, so they should be avoided. Several companies (see list of preservation suppliers) provide a wide variety of safe boxes and enclosures for book, paper and photographic materials, and a modest investment in proper storage will add considerably to the expected life of family records.

CARE AND HANDLING

Ideally, family treasures should never be handled, but that is usually an unacceptable option. Natural oils on hands transfer to documents and leave oily spots. To prevent this, at the very least, hands should be thoroughly cleaned before working with papers. The same oils do irreparable damage to pictures, so inexpensive cotton gloves available at photo stores should be worn when handling either prints or negatives. If materials are to be handled frequently, photocopies of papers and duplicates of photographs will save the originals from being inadvertently damaged.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Creating and maintaining a good climate for an entire house can be difficult and expensive. Interior closets, those located away from outside walls of the building, tend to provide an environment which is more stable. If the closet is kept shut, fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity will be reduced, and the interior will be dark and less dusty.

If you have any questions please contact:

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PRESERVATION SUPPLY COMPANY CONTACT INFORMATION

ARCHIVAL PRODUCTS

**P.O. BOX 1413
DES MOINES, IOWA 50316-1413
PHONE 1-800-526-5640
WWW.ARCHIVAL.COM**

GAYLORD (ARCHIVAL)

**PO BOX 4901
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13221-4901
PHONE 1-800-448-6160
FAX 1-800-272-3412
WWW.GAYLORD.COM**

HOLLINGER METAL EDGE

**6340 BANDINI BLVD.
COMMERCE, CA 90040
PHONE 1-800-862-2228
FAX 1-888-822-6937
WWW.HOLLINGERMETALEDGE.COM**

LIGHT IMPRESSIONS

**P.O. BOX 2100
SANTA FE SPRINGS, CA 90670
PHONE 1-800-828-6216
FAX 1-800-828-5539
WWW.LIGHTIMPRESSIONSDIRECT.COM**

UNIVERSITY PRODUCTS

**517 MAIN STREET
HOLYOKE, MA 01040
PHONE 1-800-628-1912
FAX 1-413-532-9281
WWW.ARCHIVALSUPPLIERS.COM**

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