

Thinking Inside the Hollinger Box: Preserving Your Family Stories Like an Archivist



Lieut. Armas F. Gillis,
23rd Regt. Ohio V. Infantry
Charleston
West-Virg.

1863

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Per favor
Mr. Walker

about -
going to get
money sent by
y -
arrange certificate

A. F. Gillis
this man
Tenn

1864

Mother's writing
letter not here.

Capt. Armas F. Gillis
23rd Regiment Ohio V. Inftry.
2^d Infy. Division. April Crookston
Warpers Ferry.

about a call from
Mrs. Hayes &
sending her cord

Handling

Handle audiovisual materials such as photographs, negatives, slides, and film with gloves. **You can end up leaving your fingerprints behind for posterity!** Paper does not require gloves, just clean hands. Gloves can decrease dexterity and cause you to tear a valuable paper!

Hands Off!

Place fragile items in sleeves to reduce the need to handle them.

Archivists often wear cotton gloves, but you can buy **disposable nitrile gloves** as well. If you wash your cotton gloves use mild soap that is free of dye and fragrances.

Only handle your collections in a clean space. Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling historic items. Wash your hands first. Prevent accidents before they happen!



Organizing and Documenting



Label your photographs! Don't leave it up to future generations to guess who that was smiling at the camera. Label photographs on the back, pressing lightly with a pencil. **Never use a pen** on historic collections.

Label your folders as well. Let everyone know what you were thinking when you organized your collections. Keep brittle items in folders rather than envelopes to reduce chances of tearing.

You can use acid free paper to interleave photographs in a folder or album and keep them from sticking or bleeding onto each other.

Never over stuff a box, and never under fill it either. Create a buffer to make sure your objects are not rattling around inside!

Newspaper clippings are very acidic and hard to preserve. Keep them away from other items or make copies on acid free paper.

Be Kind, Rewind

The number one rule of historic preservation: never do something to an object that cannot be undone.

Storage

To prevent mold and chemical decay, your family papers, photographs, and objects should be stored in a **cool, dry place**.

Unfortunately human beings aren't always comfortable in the environment that papers and photographs enjoy. Try to keep your collections in an area of your house where the temperature and humidity fluctuate the least. **Above all, historic objects hate change!**

Humidity: 15-65%

Temperature:
below 75 F

Avoid the risk of water damage by keeping your collections out of attics and basements. Try a shelf in a bedroom- keep your items off the floor where pests may enter.



Don't do this

Supplies

Archivists use special supplies to store their collections. These supplies help historic items last longer in storage and during use. Below is a list of some of the items you can use at home:

- **Archival Storage Box** – Boxes protect their contents from light, dust, and air pollutants. Some boxes are also acrylic coated to deflect moisture.
- **Acid Free Folders** – Folders are the most commonly used archival enclosure. Archivists group related items in folders and label them with information describing the contents. This makes it easier to retrieve particular items from boxes.
- **35mm Slide Sleeves** – Archivists prefer sleeves over carousels for long term storage of slides. Sleeves protect slides from dust and allow viewing the image without touching the slide.
- **Acid Free Envelopes** – Envelopes protect from light and dust and provide physical support. Items you place in envelopes should be able to slide in and out easily.
- **Polyester Sleeves** – Sleeves provide support like envelopes, but also allow you to see a document without removing it from its enclosure. Sleeves can help protect brittle documents or keep fingerprints off of photographs.
- **Acid Free Paper** – Archivists use acid free paper to copy delicate items like news clippings. You can also use acid free paper as an insert to separate photographs.

The Meaning of “Acid Free”

The way we make paper has changed over time. In fact, you will find that documents from the early days of the United States often outlive newspapers from the 1930s.



Until the mid-1800s, most paper was made from rags with long, strong fibers. With changes in literacy rates, printing technology, and free time, there was a market for paper that could be made faster and cheaper. This led to using **wood-pulp** as a base.

Wood- pulp contains **lignin**, which, if not removed, can cause **acid hydrolysis**, forcing the paper to break down. Paper made without this lignin is thus “**acid free**.” Since the 1980s, most paper has been made with this lignin removed, but archival quality paper will also often be “**buffered**” to resist acid breakdown, or made partially of cotton stock.

The plastics that archivists use are also chemically stable to make sure they don't break down. If you are shopping for your own supplies, look for products that are made of **polypropylene** or **polyethylene**.

**CHEMICALLY
UNSTABLE, DO NOT
USE:**

- Paperclips
- Tape
- Staples
- Magnetic Photo Albums



Display

Light will fade and damage your collections. If possible, only display copies.

If you frame an original item, only use archival quality materials. Do not tape the original to a mat or frame.

When Making Copies...

- Do not use an automatic feeder
- Do not crush objects with the lid of a flatbed scanner.
- Do not stress a book's binding. If possible, scan from above.

When displaying original items, **monitor light exposure** and rotate items off display regularly. Sunlight and fluorescent light are particularly damaging.

Once you have scanned your original documents be sure to **record the details** somewhere.

Just as you would write names on the back of a physical photograph, record this information for the future!

Light damage



Resources

- Other Organizations

- Northeast Document Conservation Center- www.nedcc.org
- National Archives- www.archives.gov/preservation
- Library of Congress- www.loc.gov/preservation/care/

- Archival Supplies

- Gaylord Archival- www.gaylord.com
- Hollinger Metal Edge- www.hollingermetaledge.com
- Clear File- www.clearfile.com

- Safety

- Be sure to check out organizations such as OSHA or the CDC to find information on archival dangers such as mold.



Have fun
preserving *your*
family tree!