

# Don't Lose All Those Pictures and Documents

Monday, May 15, 2023, Mt. Lebanon Genealogy Society

## History of Photography

1839	Daguerreotypes
1850	Glass plates
1860-1875	Tintypes
1860-1900	<i>Cartes de visite</i> (cabinet cards)
1885	Flexible roll film (Eastman)
1930s	Verichrome B&W Snapshot Film
1936	Kodak color film for professionals
1950s	Color film enters the consumer market
1960s	Polaroid instant photos
2000	Digital imaging starts taking over

## History of Document Reproduction

400 A.D.	Handwriting by scribes
1440	Printing press
1700s	Handwriting taught in elite schools
1830s	Handwriting taught in public schools
1870	Offset press
1885	Mimeograph
1911	Screen printing
1925	Dot matrix printing
1938	Xerography
1969	Laser printer
1984	Ink-jet printer
1993	Digital printer

## Handling Family Papers and Photographs

Have a clean, clear space prepared to place the originals before you get them out.
Don't eat, drink, or smoke around originals.
Wash hands before handling paper and don't apply lotion as it can stain paper. Paper can be handled without gloves because clean, lotion-free hands will not stain the paper and gloves can make it hard to handle delicate paper.
Handle photographs and negatives carefully, preferably with cotton gloves. Fingerprints can cause permanent stains on photographs and negatives. However, stacks of papers and photos can be damaged from trying to turn them with gloves on.

## Before You Start

### Set A Goal

### Organize Your Space

The floor is not a good space to work!!!
The dining room table is only a good space if you never eat there!
Bring all of your resources into one space, like a spare bedroom or dedicated office space.
One side of the room could house your resources and the other side your finished products.
Clean up as you go – trash goes out after each session.

### Making Your Choices

Clean out blurred and unnecessary documents and photos.
If it's not the original and you have a digital copy, do you really need to keep it?
Separate all into albums, folders, or boxes.
DO NO HARM! Simple tasks like removing photos from albums and repairing scotch tape degradation can usually be achieved by putting the item in the freezer for five (5)

minutes at a time until the task can be completed without damage.

Contact a conservator if you cannot safely solve a problem with correct storage and handling. Wet or currently pest-infested materials need quick action to prevent further damage. In most other cases, you have time to decide if you want treatment completed or if you would like to store the items in their damaged condition.

## Sort and Separate Photos and Documents

### Photos

Who: By person, family, and/or event

Where: Location (city/state), type (event),

When: Date, decade, or era (military, monarchy, political)

### Documents

Original Official: Government, church, organizations, etc.

Original Handwritten: Letters, documents, etc.

Copies (not original): Government, church, organizations, etc.

Digital Copies: Copies of original documents

## What to Keep - What Not to Keep

### Think about who and what someone wants to know?

*May be digital. Bold items could have genealogical value.*

<b>Forever</b>	
<b>Personnel Correspondence:</b> Letters, cards, announcements, memorabilia.	<b>Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale</b> <b>Education records</b>
<b>Medical records</b>	<b>Vital records (birth, death, marriage, divorce, adoption)</b>
Legal documents (wills, living wills, power of attorney designation, medical and burial instructions, beneficiary documents)	Income tax returns Automobile titles Trust documents
Investment trade statements	Insurance policies (keep for the life of the policy)
Receipts for warranties	CPA audit reports
Current insurance policies	Car records (keep until the sale of the car)
<b>For Seven Years</b>	
Bank records	W-2 and 1099 forms
Receipts for tax purposes	Personnel and payroll records
Disability records	Unemployment benefit records
Settled accident claims	<b>Mortgages, deeds, and leases on sold property</b>
Records on sold stocks and bonds	
<b>For One Year or Less</b>	
Checkbook ledgers	Credit card statements

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Paycheck stubs (keep until reconciled with W-2)	Utility records
Monthly financial statements	Medical bills (in case of insurance disputes)
Monthly mortgage statements	Credit card receipts ATM and deposit slips

Bills

Keep the relative humidity (rH) below 65% to prevent mold growth and reduce insect activity.

Avoid very low relative humidity because relative humidity below 15% can cause brittleness.

## Risks

Store items out of damp basements, garages, and hot attics. Keep items away from sources of leaks and floods, such as pipes, windows, or known roof leaks.

Store items on a shelf so they don't get wet.

Store items away from food and water which are attractive to insects and rodents.

## Get More Information

LegacyBox: <https://legacybox.com/blogs/analog/how-to-organize-30-years-of-photos>

ScanMyPhotos:

<https://www.scanmyphotos.com/services/photo-scanning.html>

The Best Photo Organizing Software for 2023:

<https://legacybox.com/blogs/analog/how-to-organize-30-years-of-photos>

The Photo Detective, Maureen Taylor: Website, Facebook, YouTube Podcasts

<https://maureentaylor.com/>

Staples – archival products: <https://www.staples.com/>

BHG&G:

<https://www.bhg.com/decorating/storage/organization-basics/how-to-organize-photos/>

American Library Association:

<https://www.ala.org/alcts/preservationweek/howto/photos#:~:text=Store%20paper%20items%20in%20a,is%20best%20for%20color%20photos>

Family History Daily:

<https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how-to/organize-genealogy-records-photos-heirlooms/>

PrintFile Archival Storage: <https://www.printfile.com/>

Archival Methods:

[https://www.archivalmethods.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwpPKiBhDvARIsACn-gzDlwqJYfl1yF4kJYZR2CGfPxPMckMvHlg2RWB0cEtN9pZDzrhUzoaAnxyEALw\\_wcB](https://www.archivalmethods.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwpPKiBhDvARIsACn-gzDlwqJYfl1yF4kJYZR2CGfPxPMckMvHlg2RWB0cEtN9pZDzrhUzoaAnxyEALw_wcB)

Declutter Your Photo Life: Curating, Preserving, Organizing, and Sharing Your Photos, paperback by Adam Prat

Pinterest: 44 Photo Organization Ideas

MyHeritage In Color™ and Photo Enhancer tools:

- <https://www.myheritage.com/incolor>
- <https://www.myheritage.com/photo-enhancer>

Gaylord Bros [www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)

University Products, <http://www.universityproducts.com/>

## Photo and Document Storage

Albums: Get your photos out of those 1960s albums with the plastic page covering.

The acid from the plastic is reacting with the photo process. That is what is discoloring your photos.

Containers: Use only archival-safe, acid-free boxes, whether cardboard or vinyl.

Folders: Use only archival-safe, acid-free folders. Do not use printed labels on the folders as their "shelf-life" is only about 10 years. Write on the folders in pencil only.

Digital: Photo-to-Digital scanning apps; Personal scanners and printers; Digitizing services

## Equipment

### Preservation Tools

Brushes  
Spatulas for removing photos  
Acid-free mounting corners

Acid-free clear sleeves  
Mounting strips  
Acid-Free tissue paper  
Micron Pens  
Sleeves

### Scanners

- Epson Perfection V600 and V850 Color Flatbed Scanner
- Epson FastFoto FF-680W
- Portable: Plustek Photo Scanner, CZUR, Canon, FlipPal
- Handheld

## Photo and Document Storage

Albums and folders: Make sure all pages, corners, and folders are archival-safe.

Containers:

- Are big enough for the originals to lay flat or upright without folding or bending;
- Are the right sizes, so items don't shift;
- Use a spacer board if there are not enough items to fill an upright box;
- Don't overstuff the box;
- Are made of board or folder stock that is lignin-free and acid-free or buffered;
- Have passed the Photographic Activity Test ([PAT](#)) if storing photographs.

## Secure Location

### Environmental Control

The lower the temperature the longer your items will last because cooler temperatures slow the rate of chemical decay and reduce insect activity. Keep the temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit (F).