

# CARING FOR FAMILY KEEPSAKES

## TOP 10 FAMILY TREASURES

2019 PRESERVATION WEEK WEBINAR

HOSTED BY ALCTS

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*In every family, someone inherits "The Stuff."*

It's impossible to preserve materials forever; but good archival practices will slow down the effects of time and minimize deterioration. Whether you are the "Family Curator" for a house filled with family heirlooms, or a single shoebox of old photos, use these techniques to honor your ancestors by proper care of the things they left behind.

### Archival Basics

- Select archival quality storage containers
- Purchase supplies from reputable archival suppliers
- Use plastic products that have passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT)
- Use products made from new, pure materials; never recycled materials
- Select traditional materials such as 100% cotton rag paper, unbleached cotton muslin and cotton twill tape
- Keep collections together; one box for Grandpa, one for Uncle Joe
- Store documents unfolded and flat, with envelopes
- Remove foreign objects: staples, pins, paper clips before storing
- Consult a professional conservator for restoration or repair

### Where to Store Your Family Heirlooms?

Display and store heirlooms in locations where the item is protected from UV light and possible damage from people or pets. Avoid direct sunlight, fireplaces, and heating or air conditioning vents. Wooden furniture, textiles, and other items are very susceptible to fading and damage from fluctuating temperatures and humidity.

For smaller items, create a Home Archive in a location that is fairly consistent in temperature and humidity, such as a closet or room inside your heated, ventilated, air-conditioned home. An interior closet or closet shelf in a guest room might be a good choice. A metal storage closet or metal filing cabinet are also good choices. Avoid placing your keepsakes near plumbing or electrical wires.

Choose archival quality storage materials that are acid-free, lignin-free. Use layered storage with archival file folders, sleeves, or envelopes enclosing your keepsake. Place these enclosures inside archival containers such as flat drop-front boxes, upright file boxes, or specialty collection boxes. Store boxes inside your Home Archive.

## Archival Enemies – The Big Six

1. Light
2. Moisture
3. Pollution
4. Bugs and Pests
5. Beasts
6. People

## Prevent Damage Before it Starts

1. Use only archival-quality storage containers
2. Keep archival storage area clean and dry
3. Monitor storage for potential problems

## Remember These Four Steps

1. **Digitize** – digital camera or scanner
2. **Display** – avoid light, heat, dust, handling
3. **Preserve** – in acid-free, lignin-free new archival storage materials
4. **Document** -- [sample citation]

Wooden case clock, Levenick Family Collection; privately held by Daniel Levenick, Pasadena, California, 2015. Wooden case clock of unknown origin and maker measuring 92 x 18-inches. Clock was purchased in Pasadena, California by Col. Maynard N. Levenick, Pasadena, California and given to his son Daniel Levenick in 1985.

*Model: Evidence Explained*, by Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Privately Held Materials, Family Artifacts*, 3.25, pgs. 138-139

## Record Your Heirloom History

Remember to write down the history of your family heirloom so the next generation isn't left wondering where the treasure fits in your family story. Include:

- names, addresses, and relationship of previous owners
- how the heirloom has been passed down
- when or why it was created, purchased, or acquired

Most importantly, write down a full and complete description. One day the item may become lost and the description, with a photo, could be all that's left. Include measurements, color, weight, materials, manufacturer, label, and other information.

Visit <https://thefamilycurator.com/resources/> to download the Heirloom History Form.

## Resources

(Links Accurate as of 4/25/2019)

### Archival Suppliers

**Archival Products** (800) 526-5640

<https://archival.com/>

**Blick Art Supplies**, locations nationwide

<http://www.dickblick.com>

**Brodart** (888) 820-4377, catalog

<http://www.shopbrodart.com>

**Gaylord Archival** (800) 448-6160, catalog

<http://www.gaylord.com>

**HollingerMetal Edge** (800) 862-2228, catalog

<http://www.hollingermetaledge.com>

### Learn More

Levenick, Denise May. *The Family Curator*. <http://thefamilycurator.com>.

Levenick, Denise May. *How to Archive Family Photos*. Family Tree Books, 2015.

Levenick, Denise May. *How to Archive Family Keepsakes*. Family Tree Books, 2012.

Powell, Kimberly. *About.com Genealogy*.

[http://genealogy.about.com/library/weekly/aa\\_preserving\\_heirlooms.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/library/weekly/aa_preserving_heirlooms.htm)

Williams, Don and Louisa Jaggard. *Saving Stuff*. New York: Fireside Books, 2005.

### Archival Information

#### ALCTS Preservation Week Archives

<http://www.ala.org/alcts/preservationweek>

Preservation webinars and programs.

#### American Institute for Conservation

<http://www.conservation-us.org>

Find a Conservator in your area to assist with restoration and conservation.

#### Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/preserv/familytreasures>

Preservation information and resources for caring for family treasures.

#### National Archives Administration (NARA)

<http://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/>

Expert suggestions for preserving family papers, photographs and memorabilia.

#### National Park Service, Museum Management Program

<http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/conserv.html>

Conserve-O-Grams Pamphlet Series

#### Northeast Document Conservation Center

<http://www.nedcc.org>

Educational and restoration services for individuals and organizations, including online webinars, workshops, helpful advice, and disaster assistance.