

1985

EC85-413 Family Keepsakes

Shirley Niemeyer

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>

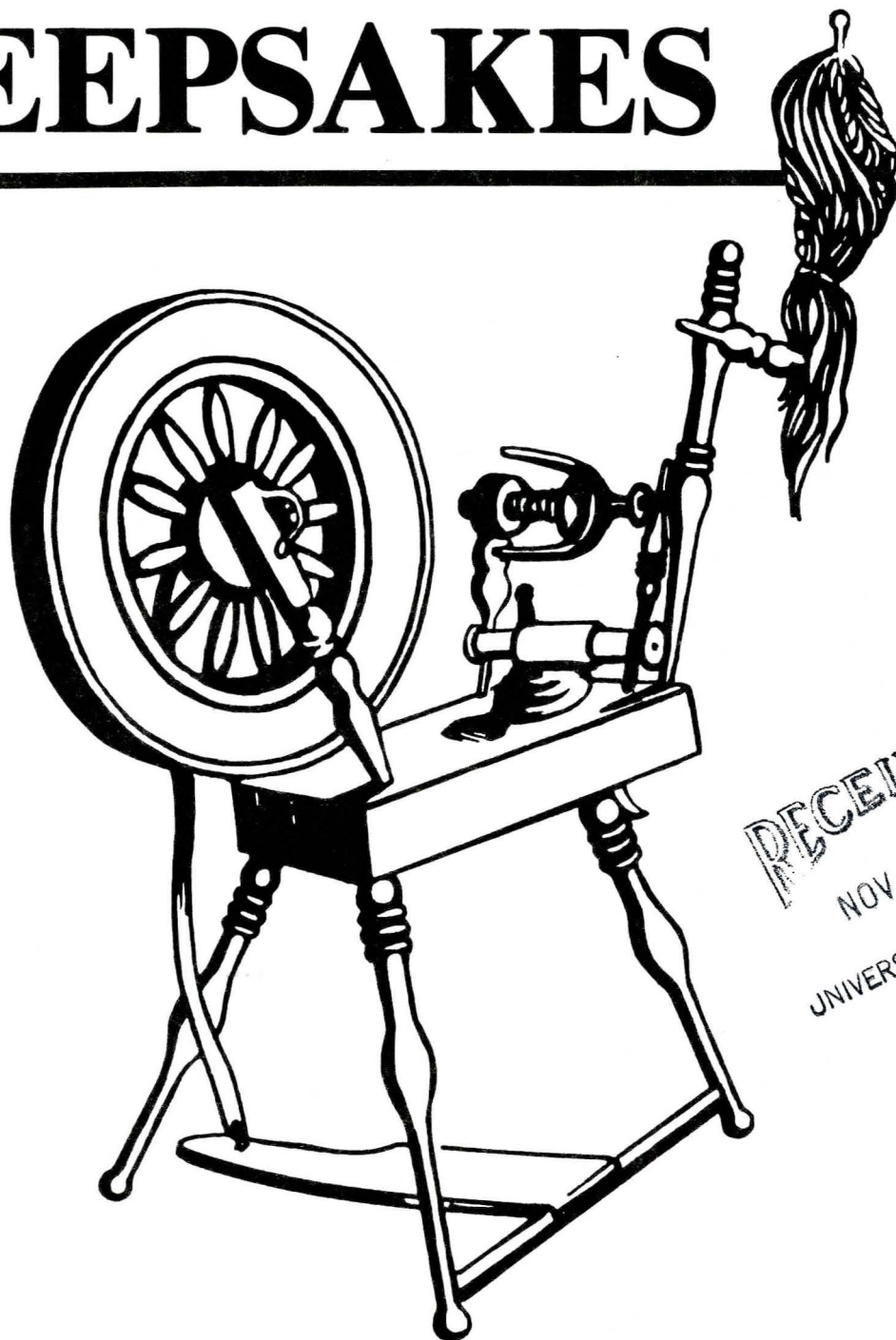
Niemeyer, Shirley, "EC85-413 Family Keepsakes" (1985). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 4586.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/4586>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

AGR1
S
85
EC
85-413

Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service EC 85-413

FAMILY KEEPSAKES



RECEIVED
NOV 08 1985
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
LIBRARIES



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Leo E. Lucas, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



The Cooperative Extension Service provides information and educational programs to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, sex or handicap.



Family Keepsakes

Shirley Niemeyer

Extension Specialist-Interior Design/Home Furnishings



Some of the objects we possess are significant to us. These objects are cared for, cherished, and passed on to future generations with the hope that they will continue to be treasured. These objects are our "Family Keepsakes."

The Meaning of Things

Why are some possessions more meaningful to us than others? Keepsakes may reinforce and help to stabilize our sense of who we are. Scrapbooks, photos, and other memorabilia serve as visual evidence of our past. Keepsakes help us retain memories of people or experiences that have meaning, and they provide emotional support.¹

Possessions and memories can serve as anchors to self in changing conditions. Taking along keepsakes when

moving to a new residential setting can ease the transition. They can link our self-concept or self-identity to the new environment.¹

People find some types of items more meaningful than others. One study involving children and the elderly indicates that these groups cherish objects which may be classified as either *action* objects or *contemplative* objects. The objects that children cherish are more often those representing action, such as a stereo, TV, or musical instrument. The elderly cherish objects that represent more contemplative action, such as photos, furniture, or books. The elderly also express more attachment to items that provide a connection to their past and the activities of their daily existence.²

Thus, family keepsakes serve as a basis for self-identity, are reminders of people and experiences, and help to ease transitions. Caring for these possessions acknowledges their importance to us.

¹Boschetti, M. *The Older Person's Emotional Attachment to the Physical Environment of the Residential Setting*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984.

²Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E. Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.



What is a Keepsake?

Heirlooms, collectibles, and antiques—each have identifiable characteristics, but can also be classified as keepsakes, as shown by the following definitions.

Keepsake—Something kept as a memento or reminder, or for sentimental value. A keepsake may also be an heirloom, collectible, antique, reproduction, or other object.

Heirloom—A piece of personal property owned by a family for several generations. It may have special monetary or sentimental value.

Collectible—Any object that is collected other than traditionally collectible items, such as art, coins, stamps, and antiques. Collectibles are usually products of the Machine Age and curiosities of the past. Normally, the object can no longer be purchased new. These are the more recent “old things” and may be “future antiques.”

Antique—Generally, something at least 100 years old, made prior to the Industrial Revolution (1830) and mass production, that has a handmade quality, with one-of-a-kind characteristics, and/or with some historical or cultural value. However, even the experts disagree on the “true” definition of an antique. The commonly accepted definition is anything more than 100 years old. Purists, however, use the year 1830 in defining antiques as this was the year determined by the government for taxation of imported antiques.

Safeguarding Your Keepsakes

Protecting family keepsakes involves 1) understanding the value of the items; 2) safeguarding them against natural disasters or theft; 3) keeping adequate records and inventories of the items in the event of insurance claims and legal actions; and 4) using appropriate storage, display and cleaning techniques.

Assessing the Value

Indiscriminate collecting of keepsakes having little sentimental, artistic, historic, or economic value can result in an accumulation of meaningless objects. Before deciding to keep an object, ask yourself these questions:

1. Does this object have sentimental value to me, or to anyone close to me?
2. Is this something I will wish to pass on to others as a memento or family heirloom?
3. Does this item have artistic value? Is it well-designed? Is the design or material unusual?
4. Is it of importance to my history or to the history of my family, community, etc.?
5. Does the object have economic value or potential for increasing in value?
6. Do I have a place to safely and adequately care for, store, and display the item?
7. Is it in a condition to be maintained, repaired, or displayed?

Know what you have, why it is important to you, and what it is worth. Keep records that prove the authenticity of items you have and those that are given to you.

Libraries and bookstores have many publications, catalogues, and price and identification guide books on almost every type of antique and collectible to assist you in identifying, determining values, and documenting items.

Appraisals

Before anything is sold, discarded, or given away, establish its value. You may also want to have items you are keeping appraised in case you have to file an insurance claim and for other legal purposes.

To know specifically what your antiques and collectibles are worth and to document their value, you may need the services of a professional personal property appraiser. Appraisers of antique and collectible keepsakes should be specialists—people who have knowledge about current prices and who have expertise related to your specific items. They exchange an opinion about a keepsake’s monetary worth for a fee.

Spend as much time finding a qualified appraiser as you would looking for a professional in any field. Dealing with an appraiser who can provide references, or who is recommended by someone having had professional experience with that appraiser, is advisable. Avoid seeking appraisals from anyone who offers to buy your items or to sell you theirs.

The State of Nebraska does not require testing or licensing to become an appraiser of personal property such as antiques. Ask the person being considered how long they have been in business, about their training, and what professional organizations they may belong to.

The Appraisers Association of America, Inc. (60 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10165) provides a list of its



members for a small fee. Another source of information is the American Society of Appraisers (Dulles International Airport, P.O. Box 17265, Washington, D.C. 20041).

Auction houses are another source of appraisers. Auctioneers may appraise consignments for sales.

Establish the cost of the appraisal *before* allowing it to be made. Clarify whether the fee is an hourly rate, a flat fee, or a percentage of what is eventually determined to be the value of the item(s). Percentage rates can be as high as 10 percent. Always ask for an estimate in writing before the appraisal is made.

An appraisal should include a listing of the objects with the description, identification, condition, and value stated for each one. The appraisal should be dated, and the signature of the appraiser witnessed by a notary public. Keep the appraisal in a safety-deposit box and update it periodically.

Estimating Value

Methods of estimating value include talking to dealers at auctions and antique fairs, and visiting secondhand and antique stores and flea markets. When talking to dealers, however, remember they are in the business of buying and selling.

Dealers you know that specialize in the items you are interested in may help you determine the value of an item. However, they may decline because they prefer to specialize in buying and selling.

Avoid indiscriminate discussions of your items in public places, with strangers, or with people you have not established as trustworthy. Avoid leaving items for appraisal. Use caution in revealing information about your family keepsakes, antiques, and collectibles. If you must leave an object to be appraised, get a receipt for it.

Inventory Your Valuables



Keep a written inventory, description, and valuation of your keepsakes. If you can, photograph everything. An inventory, especially a photo inventory, serves as a memory jog, shows the existing condition of the items, and can provide evidence of their possession for insurance purposes.

If you decide to do an inventory yourself, ask for an inventory booklet from your insurance company or a copy of EC75-2038, "Household Inventory," from the Cooperative Extension Service office in your county.

Photo inventories can be done by using a home video cassette recorder and video camera, or a 35mm camera.

The camera should have a close-up lens to focus on small serial numbers, identification marks, or trademarks. Keep a list of your collection that includes a description of each item you photograph. You can also use a voice recorder to describe the objects as you photograph them.

Shoot each room at a wide angle. Then go around the room, photographing and listing each item. Take close-ups of particularly valuable objects.

Put the tape, photos, and inventory list in a safe spot away from your home, such as a safety-deposit box. Keep two copies of the inventory, if possible. Keep descriptive brochures, sales receipts, professional appraisals, etc. with your written inventory. Update your inventory yearly.

An inventory will enable you and your insurance agent to determine if you have enough insurance coverage on your personal property, and whether you have items that are not currently covered. A household inventory can also be a great help in a claims settlement. And, these records may help verify noncovered losses for income tax deductions.

Insurance



Homeowners and tenants insurance policies have built-in limits and exclusions in most package policies. **Read your policy carefully** or contact your insurance agent to check your policy limitations and exclusions regarding antiques, collectibles, etc.

Limitations *commonly* found in home package policies include \$100 limit on coins and medals; \$500 limit on stamps; \$500 limit for loss by theft of jewelry, watches, precious and semi-precious stones; and \$1000 limit for loss by theft of silverware, goldware, pewter, and guns.

Under many homeowners policies you may only be reimbursed for your personal possessions at the value of the expected remaining life of the damaged item. This *actual cash value* is the replacement cost of the property minus a charge for depreciation.

Replacement cost is the cost of replacing or repairing property with materials of similar kind and quality,



without any deduction for depreciation. It is the full cost of replacing property at today's prices. It is not the same as *market value*, or what you could sell the property for.

If you think that your antiques and keepsakes are not adequately covered, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of additional insurance.

Additional insurance protection for antiques and some keepsakes can be purchased under a "scheduled personal property floater" endorsement to your current policy. Normally, you will be required to list each item to be insured, with a description of the item and the amount of insurance you desire, along with evidence of ownership and verification of the item's value, such as appraisals, bills of sale, or photographs.

Some objects that have sentimental value to you may not be insurable under a scheduled personal property floater unless you can establish their monetary value.

HEG79-103, "Homeowner Insurance," contains additional information. Ask for a copy from the Cooperative Extension Service office in your county.

Giving to Others

Safeguarding your keepsakes to pass on to others involves some additional steps. The giving of keepsakes to others is significant to many people. Passing on personal possessions may have a symbolic meaning, such as representing the giving of a portion of ourselves to family or friends. Giving up control over possessions becomes important to some people. How they manage the process may be crucial to their sense of self-worth and well-being.¹

Deciding who is to receive specific items and writing down your intentions, or giving away items while you are alive, may serve to ease the transition and preparation for what the future holds.

The process may be handled through a "laundry list" or letter of last intentions — an attachment to a will. The "laundry list" outlines personal items to go to specifically named individuals, and is signed.

Preserving the Precious

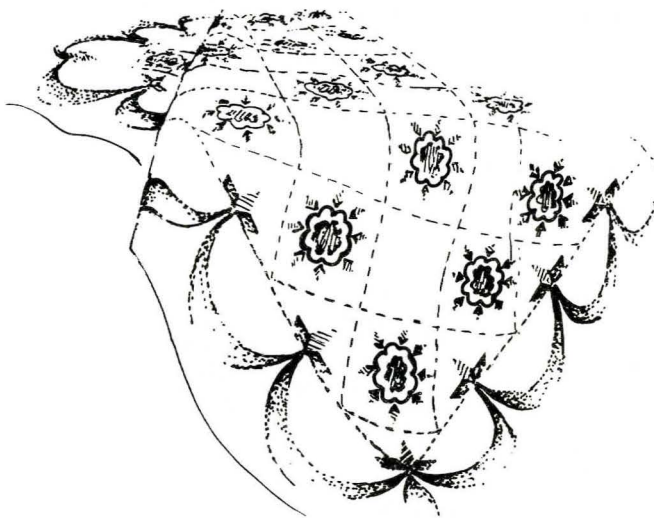
The keepsakes you collect add your individual personality to your home. However, the where-to-put-it problem may arise. Some people have a "use all" policy. Their keepsakes are sat on, cooked in, served on, and displayed. Others attempt to preserve special keepsakes for the future. These keepsakes are displayed, stored, and cared for as carefully as possible. Most of us fall someplace in the middle in our care and use of keepsakes.

Before deciding how you want to display, store, and care for your keepsakes, review the seven questions in the "Assessing the Value" section. In addition, ask yourself:

1. What is the item made of?
2. How long do I want to retain the item?
3. How long will the item last in its present condition?
4. Do I want to retain the item as closely as possible to its current condition?
5. What type of conditions are most damaging to the item?
6. If I attempt to clean, display, or store the item and it is damaged, how will I feel?

There are no hard, fast rules for storing, displaying, and caring for your keepsakes. However, there are some guidelines. Storage, display, and care should be practical and within the means of you and your family in terms of cost, time, and energy. You will need to evaluate the following recommendations based on your decisions regarding the value of the keepsakes to you. Some of these may be easily adopted for particular keepsakes while others may be impractical or impossible. The decision is yours.

The first step in assuring proper care, storage, or display is to group the keepsakes that are similar in terms of care requirements. Items can be grouped according to similar needs for humidity levels, temperature, security, cleanliness, lighting, frequency of use, weight, and bulk.

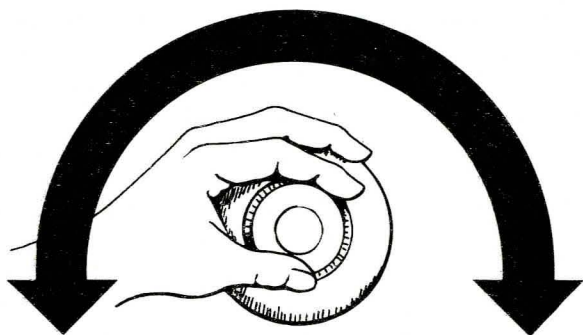


Now evaluate your available space for storage and display, using the same criteria used to analyze the requirements for the keepsakes. After selecting the areas you plan to use, check the conditions throughout the year.

Deterioration is often caused by a combination of environmental factors, such as heat, light, and humidity levels, that are not suited to the item. Together, each may make the others more dangerous.



Environmental Control



Proper control of the environment is one of the most important conservation measures you can take to slow down the deterioration of keepsakes. Factors to be considered include **temperature, humidity, pollution, light** and **vermin** (mice, insects, etc.).³

You can't insure against some damage and deterioration happening to your keepsakes. However, you can extend their lives through 1) awareness of causes of damage, and 2) controlling the environment in which keepsakes are stored, used, and displayed.

Rapid and frequent fluctuations in temperature and humidity are major factors that can cause severe damage to keepsakes. Even gradual changes can cause damage. Objects expand and contract. Ideally, temperature and relative humidity levels should vary as little as possible.

Fluctuations in relative humidity from as low as 15 percent in the winter to 80 percent in the summer lead to sweating on metal objects and hard surfaces. Paint and veneers peel and crack.

Air that is too dry and too hot causes paper, leather, and textile keepsakes to become brittle. Wooden objects shrink and crack. Objects kept too close to heat sources, such as incandescent light fixtures, radiators, and heat ducts, can also be damaged.

Warmth and high humidity, along with low light levels and stagnant air, create excellent conditions for the growth of fungus, mold, mildew, and dry rot. This is a problem especially with keepsakes made of organic materials. Paper objects show signs of foxing (brown spotty stains) or mold growth; starch paste and leather weakens.

A relative humidity of 55 percent is considered most suitable for woodenware, leather, parchment, and textiles, but it is difficult to maintain in a home environment. The acceptable range is 45 to 60 percent. In air

with less than 40 percent, static electricity increases, some fabrics and paper stick, and organic materials dry out. In areas with over 60 percent humidity, wood objects swell, veneers may peel, metals oxidize, and mold may grow on organic materials.

Indoor air pollutants damage items. Smoke, soot, and gases such as hydrogen sulfide tarnish silver, rust iron, erode stone, bleach paper, and decay leather. Particles in the air can abrade items.

Home air filtering systems can help provide a cleaner environment. However, some of the systems, such as electronic precipitator filters, may give off ozone — a strong oxidizer.

Product pollutants can affect keepsakes. Contact with some plastics such as polyvinyl chloride, which can release gases, can result in damage to the item. Colored papers can stain keepsakes if they become damp. Inks used to mark outer wrappings can bleed through. Moth crystals can soften some plastics. Excelsior (fine wood shavings used in packing) can corrode metal objects.

Ordinary cardboard boxes, wood, pastes, tissue, and most papers contain acids that can cause chemical damage to the objects they touch.

Exposure of keepsakes to light can cause damage. Continued exposure to light in any form (sunlight, incandescent, or fluorescent) can cause permanent damage to keepsakes. The damage is caused by the ultraviolet (UV) rays and the concentrated heat produced. Daylight through window glass and fluorescent lights are strong UV sources.

Heat and humidity, together with the UV light, cause increased oxidation and deterioration of organic items. UV light in large amounts fades and embrittles textiles, paper, dyes, and varnishes, and darkens or bleaches wood. The cellulose in wood, paper, and textiles is especially sensitive to light when inks and dyes are used in the materials. Leather, ivory, silk, wool, and similar organic products are also damaged by light. All colors will fade with constant exposure to light.³

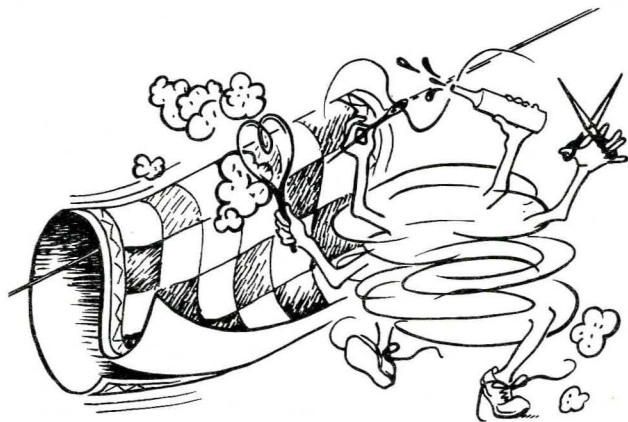
The effects of light cannot be reversed by storing keepsakes in darkness once the damage has occurred. The damage is cumulative.

Vermin can damage keepsakes. Consult G79-470, "Controlling House Mice," available through the Cooperative Extension Service office in your county for methods to control mice.

Principles of Conservation and Care

Before attempting to clean, repair, store, or display a specific valuable item, consult references or specialists in the field related to the item. When in doubt, don't touch! Valuable keepsakes have been damaged and destroyed by careless storage, displaying, cleaning, repairs, and "overrestoration." Avoid these "human termite" errors.

³MacLeish, A. B. *The Care of Antiques and Historical Collections*. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1985.



The financial and historic value of an antique or collectible is generally related to its original condition. Generally, it is best to retain the original finish, etc. The underlying principle is: *avoid any care, cleaning, or repair if it results in irreversible changes and damage.*

Pretest cleaning products, repairs, etc. Be aware, however, that even with pretests damage may not become evident until months or years later. Even chemicals, materials, and methods recommended for use may damage some objects if certain materials or conditions are present.

The following guidelines will help prevent "human termite" error.

1. Maintain even temperature and humidity levels where valuable keepsakes are stored and displayed. Whatever the relative humidity level is, maintain as little daily or seasonal fluctuation as possible. If this is difficult, check the keepsakes often for signs of deterioration. At the first sign of problems, remove the item from the area, or work on controlling the humidity.

Humidity control can also be improved by using a humidifier or dehumidifier. However, failure to regulate portable humidifiers and dehumidifiers can cause extreme fluctuations in the humidity level when they shut down.

Avoid using the attic and basement for storing valuable keepsakes. An attic may appear to be a good place to store your keepsakes because it is dim. However, attics may have leaky roofs, and extreme temperature and humidity fluctuations. Attic temperatures can reach 150°F. Basements may have moisture problems, humidity fluctuations, and may flood. If these areas must be used, check the contents often for damage.

Hang valuable keepsakes on inner walls between rooms, and on walls that do not contain heating or plumbing elements. Avoid hanging them near or over

heating and cooling ducts, radiators, fireplaces, and on exterior walls.

2. Protect keepsakes from air and product pollutants. Wrap and box objects to be stored to protect them from dust and deterioration. Wrap fragile items individually. Label both the outside of each wrapped item and the box.

Plastics used in keepsake display and storage should be suited to the items. Polyethylene, polyester, and triacetate bags can be used to store some items, but should not be tightly sealed as moisture condensation can occur. All plastic should be chosen with care. Polyester and triacetate are usually all right to use. However, do not use polyethylene with textile items or allow it to touch silver directly. Plastics should not be used with some materials, such as leather. Avoid polyvinyl chloride, a common form of plastic, which releases harmful gases. Bubble-wrap or air-cap may also contain unstable substances. For best results, use acid-free tissue between the object and the wrap.

Use acid-free tissue to wrap items of value for long term storage, especially in plastics. Blue tissue paper has no special ability to prevent aging, and is usually not acid-free. If acid-free tissue is impossible to obtain, clean, unbleached cotton muslin can be used if it is washed yearly.

Storing keepsakes in (or on) acid-free tissue, boxes, and mat board slows down or prevents the effects of the acid from other materials, such as wood and ordinary cardboard boxes, from coming in contact with the keepsake.

Dusting and vacuuming often in the area will also help prolong the life of the keepsake.

3. Keep valuable objects in a low-lit area, away from direct sunlight and strong fluorescent lighting if possible. Consider blocking light sources with shades, or use lower light levels where items are stored or displayed. Sheets of rigid plastic, films, draperies, and blinds help control light. Use low UV fluorescent tubes, or plastic shields that slip over fluorescent tubes, to reduce the UV light level.

4. Use acid-free materials when mounting objects (newspaper and other paper items), including backing boards, tapes, etc. Pastes such as flour-and-water, wheat, or rice are less acidic, and therefore less damaging, than most other pastes. However, flour, wheat and rice pastes are subject to mildew and household pest damage, and may bubble or ripple the item. Linen tape can be used for mounting. Check art supply stores for supplies. Before using on a valuable item, test each product for any initial staining or damage.

Photocopies of clippings can be mounted in scrapbooks and the originals placed in a dark, appropriate storage place. Make new copies if the mounted ones fade.



Conservation of Specific Materials

Common keepsakes include photographs, and wood, textile, glass, paper, and metal items. Applying the previous principles of conservation and care may help to insure continued preservation of your specific keepsakes and extend their life expectancy.



Photographs

Store valuable photos carefully in lower temperature, humidity, and light levels. For example, color prints are best stored below 75 °F and 50 percent humidity, and in the dark. Avoid using plastic storage containers that may contain polyvinyl chloride. Acid-neutral boxes and acid-free envelopes are available. Envelopes and sleeves for holding photos and slides may be made of acid-neutral paper, or polyester, archival polyethylene, or triacetate plastic film.

Use photo albums with acid-neutral pages. Avoid waxed pages. Paper or polyester mounting corners can be used. Adhesive tape, white glue, rubber cement, paper clips, and moth balls or crystals can damage your photos. To label photos on the backside before storing or displaying, use a soft #1 pencil and press lightly.

Copy old photos first and then store the negatives in a dark place. Black-and-white negatives are fairly stable if well cared for. However, color slides may only last 10 to 50 years, depending on care.

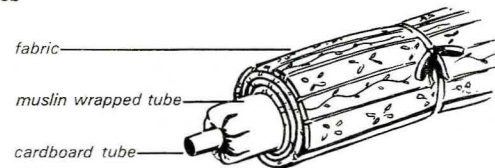
Wood



Wooden objects are protected by even temperatures, humidity control, cleanliness, and protection from vermin. A relative humidity level of 50 to 55 percent is recommended. If possible, avoid placing valuable wooden items near heating or cooling vents or ducts; fireplaces; radiators; outside doors; vents or ducts; or in direct sunlight.

Wood stored in a damp basement with little air circulation is subject to attack by fungus, resulting in dry rot. Ventilation, cleaning, and regular inspection are the best ways to prevent dry rot and insect damage.

Textiles

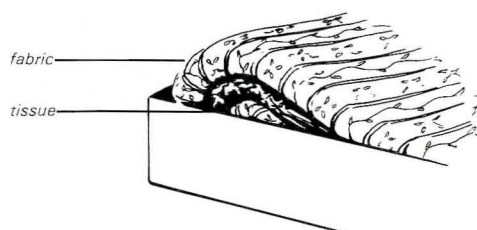
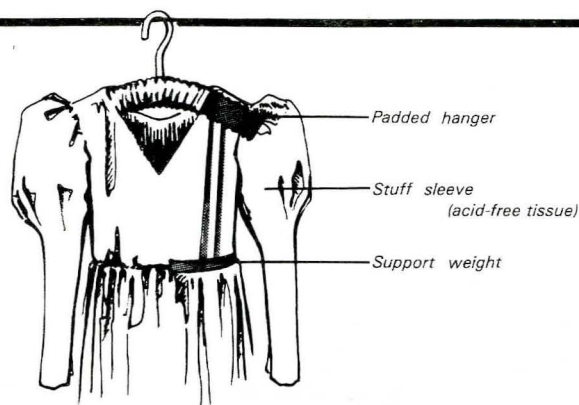


Protect stored textiles from moths, dust, light, and temperature and humidity extremes. Store textiles in dark places. Temperatures of 60 to 65 °F, and a relative humidity of around 50%, are suggested. Store away from outside walls.

An effective insecticide to use to protect textiles from moth damage is paradichlorobenzene moth crystals hung in a container or old sock in the top of the storage area. Use moth crystals to fumigate as directed on the package, but do not put them in a storage area on a permanent basis. The crystals should not come in contact with fabric. Moth crystals are toxic — use them with caution. Avoid using them with certain types of materials such as plastics. Always read and follow the package directions.

Textiles should not come into direct contact with wood, newspaper, or ordinary cardboard boxes. They become acidic, which accelerates the chemical breakdown of the fiber. Protect the textile item with acid-free tissue. A possible substitute for acid-free tissue is to use and replace regular white tissue yearly, or to use cotton unbleached muslin or sheets, washed yearly to return them to a neutral state. Remove plastic and metal buttons, pins, foam padding, and rubberized shields before storing as they may stain the item.

Store textile items flat and preferably unfolded. Avoid storing old textiles by hanging them on metal hangers. Wire hangers put a strain on the shoulders of garments, and the metal can rust. If items must be hung, use wooden or plastic hangers, and carefully pad the hangers and the shoulders of garments with polyester fiberfill or unbleached cotton muslin to prevent damage and creasing. Flat textile items will not crease if hung over a round support or hung straight. Textiles can also be wrapped around a cardboard cylinder that has been covered with acid-free tissue.



If items must be folded, place acid-free tissue in the folds. Avoid continually refolding along creases as this will break the threads at the crease. Refold occasionally to distribute wear at folds and creases. Do not roll a folded item.

When vacuuming a textile item, reduce the suction. Place a fiberglass screen or piece of nylon tulle over the textile item to protect it when vacuuming.

Glass



Store glass items in a stable environment, away from heating and air conditioning vents, radiators, and strong light. Store valued glass keepsakes in areas with a relative humidity of 45 to 50 percent. Avoid areas of extreme temperature fluctuations.

Glass can be washed by hand in warm water with a deionized soap, such as Orvus®, or a mild detergent. A water conditioner (softener), found in grocery stores, can be added to the water in hard water areas. Irreversible silica filming or etching can result from washing some types of glass in a dishwasher. Heavily soiled glass bottles can be cleaned by gently swirling a handful of uncooked rice or fine sand in water in the bottle.

Dust glass often with a damp cloth as dust can scratch and abrade glass. Dusting with a dry cloth may scratch the glass. Feather dusters or soft brushes can be used.

Paper



Extremely high or low humidity levels, high temperatures, and light cause rapid oxidation and deterioration of paper, as well as brittleness and fading. Store paper items out of direct sunlight. Valuable papers can be kept in acid-free folders in low light areas. A steady relative humidity of 45 to 60 percent and a temperature of 60 to 70°F is recommended.

Paradichlorobenzene moth crystals can be used with stored paper items to reduce small infestations of insect pests. But remember that moth crystals are toxic.

Some damaged paper items can be repaired. Test methods and materials before attempting repairs. Water-soaked paper can be dried between layers of clean, white blotter paper (don't weight it down), or air dried on top of blotters. Erasing powders, or artist's soft vinyl or kneaded erasers can be used carefully to remove smudged areas. Most commercial pastes and pressure sensitive tapes cause permanent stains when used to mend paper. Wheat or rice starch paste can be used, but the paper must be weighted.

Metal

Metal keepsakes exposed to high levels of humidity or ozone will oxidize more rapidly, forming an outer layer of oxidized metal. Salts and acids can also damage metals.

The metal most susceptible to corrosion is iron. Avoid trying to make iron objects look new. Over-treatment and oxidation are iron's most common enemies. Small, valuable iron objects can be cleaned by removing dust with soft brushes and very mild abrasives. If warm water is used for cleaning, be sure objects are dried thoroughly. If a clean environment and low humidity does not provide enough protection, warm the iron piece and apply microcrystalline wax or beeswax (not paraffin). This process is reversible.

Painting valuable iron antiques with black spray paint can affect their value. If the object originally had a brightly painted or shiny finish, and its condition is so bad the original finish cannot be saved, a variety of cleaning methods, such as fine bronze wool or very fine emery cloth, can be used. Avoid using harsh abrasives or wire wheels as they will permanently scratch the sur-



face. Chemical rust removers remove rust, but also etch the iron to some degree. If chemicals are used, be sure to rinse and dry the iron object thoroughly.



Examine the finish carefully before cleaning copper and its alloys, including brass and bronze. Improper treatment can affect the historical or economic value of these metals. To clean *unlacquered* brass or copper, use a rottenstone and mineral oil paste, or a paste made of two parts denatured alcohol, two parts distilled water, and powdered whiting. Proportions are not crucial. Test first. Some household cleaning remedies, such as vinegar or lemon juice mixed with salt, can leave chlorides that cause re-oxidation and should be avoided on valuable pieces. Avoid using harsh abrasives, such as coarse steel wool, on copper, brass, and other soft metals.

Oil, grime, and the residue of skin oils can be removed from unlacquered brass and copper by cleaning with alcohol or mineral spirits, or a mild detergent solution. Alcohol applied with a cotton swab can be used for touch-ups. Use caution when working with any solvent. Also use caution with chemical cleaners, especially those with ammonia, on valued brass and copper items. Residues can start new corrosion.

The Wrap-Up

In addition to preserving the keepsake, preserve information about the item. Who used it? Where did it come from? How old is it? Who are the people pictured in a photograph, and when was it taken? Who has owned it? Attach this information to the item in a way that will not damage it, or include it when storing the keepsake.

If you need more specific information about how to preserve or display a valuable keepsake, consult a pro-

fessional conservator. You might also contact a major professional organization such as the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) or the American Institute for Conservation (AIC).

AASLH (708 Berry Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37204) publishes books and technical leaflets on the collection, care, and preservation of items, maintenance of historic sites, and other subjects.

The AIC (1511 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005) publishes a newsletter and the *Journal of the AIC*.

For additional resources, consult the Nebraska State Historical Society, your local library, museums, and private collectors.

Sources of Supplies

For supplies, such as acid-free paper, contact area paper or art supply businesses. Mail order sources include (but are not limited to) the following sources. Catalogues are available.

Conservation Resources International, Inc.
8000 H Forbes Place
Springfield, Virginia 22151

University Products, Inc.
P.O. Box 101, South Canal Street
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01041

Conservation Materials, Ltd.
Box 2844, #240 Freeport Boulevard
Sparks, Nevada 89431

Product and business names used in this publication are for information only and do not imply endorsement of products named nor criticism of similar products not mentioned.

Definitions

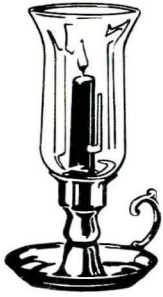
Acid-free — As used herein, acid-free refers to any paper having a pH of above 7, or an alkaline buffered paper.

Acid-neutral — In this publication, any paper having a pH of 7, or a neutral pH, is considered to be acid-neutral.

Deionized soap — Soap that has had ions removed from it.

Microcrystalline wax — A plastic material derived from petroleum refining. This wax results in a harder finish than other waxes, such as paraffin or beeswax.

Ozone — A form of oxygen with a strong odor; a strong oxidizing agent.



Acknowledgments

Appreciation is expressed to the following content specialists and reviewers:

Margaret Boschetti, Assoc. Prof., Textiles, Clothing and Design Department, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
Richard Boucher, County Attorneys Association.
Donna Boudreau, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Pat Crews, Asst. Prof. Textiles, Clothing and Design Department, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
Ann Dodge, Paper Conservator, Nebraska State Historical Society.
Jeannette Friesen, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Anita Hall, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Jill Jank, Extension Program Specialist-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Sheila Johnson, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Kurby Kreiter, Nebraska State Department of Insurance.
Betty Maier, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Sharry Nielsen, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Karyl Newman, Lincoln Questers Club.
Kathleen Parrott, Extension Specialist-Housing and Interior Design, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Gail Potter, Curator of Museum Collections, Nebraska State Historical Society.
Kathy Prochaska-Cue, Extension Family Economics and Management Specialist, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Genevieve Remus, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Dick Spencer, Curator of Education, Nebraska State Historical Society.
Carolyn Straub, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Ed Sudderth, Archaeologist, National Park Service.
Krestie Tolstedt, Extension Agent-Home Economics, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Rose Marie Tondl, Extension Specialist-Clothing and Textiles, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.
Janet Wilson, Extension Consumer Education Specialist, Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service.

References

- Beech, D. F. *Home Insurance*. Manhattan, Kansas: Kansas State University, Cooperative Extension Service, 1982.
- Boschetti, M. *The Older Person's Emotional Attachment to the Physical Environment of the Residential Setting*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E. Rochberg-Halton. *The Meaning of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- DuBose, B. M. *Insuring Against Loss*. American Association for State and Local History, (Technical Leaflet 50) 1969.
- Dunn, W. S. *Storing Your Collections: Problems and Solutions*. American Association for State and Local History. (Technical Leaflet 5) 1970.
- Keck, C. R. *Care of Textiles and Costumes: Adaptive Techniques for Basic Maintenance*. American Association for State and Local History (Technical Leaflet 71) 1974.
- Kline, T. S. *Care and Storage of Textile Heirlooms*. Clemson: Clemson University, Cooperative Extension Service (TC 414).
- The Care of Antiques and Historical Collections*. Ed. by A. B. MacLeish. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1985.
- Miller, R. W. *Price Guide to Antiques and Patterned Glass*. Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead, 1983.
- Ordonex, M. T. *Cleaning and Storing Your Wedding Gown*. College Park, Maryland: University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service (Fact Sheet 360), 1984.
- Rottenberg, B. L. *Care and Display of Glass Collections*. American Association for State and Local History, (Technical Leaflet 127) 1980.
- Saylor, M. C. *Antiques and Collectibles: Treasures in the Home*. University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University (Correspondence course 196).