

PRESERVE YOUR VALUABLE PHOTOS AND DOCUMENTS

The DON'Ts:

- Leave your CDs, DVDs or photos in a hot car or extreme heat/humidity conditions—NO NOT EVER! Don't store in attic or basements due to more extreme conditions.
- Use paper, glue or tapes that are not acid free and are not archival.
- Rely on your camera's media card to be the primary storage device for your pictures or documents. Do not remove your media card without shutting the camera off or ejecting properly from the computer. They are NOT "plug and play". Files can be corrupted easily and would probably not be recoverable.
- Place your pictures in direct sunlight unless you have a file or negative to replace that picture.
- Assume your digital media will last a life-time. Recopy them occasionally.
- Forget to label important pictures.
- Use a picture to cut out for scrapbooks UNLESS you have a duplicate picture. NEVER.
- Laminate your pictures or documents. Heat from the laminator could be a big problem.
- Handle your negatives without white gloves unless by the edges only. Acid from your fingers will eat into the negative.
- Do not put your pictures or negatives in sleeves containing PVC (polyvinylchloride).

The DOs:

- Always, always back up your data--often.
- Print the pictures you would like to keep. (Suggested professional printing, i.e., Sam's, Walgreens, etc.)
- Label your pictures—lightly on the back with pencil (not pens--especially felt tips)
- If you print your documents with inkjet printers, use the best inks available on acid free paper.
- Upgrade your electronic media as the technology improves—there will be a narrow window where you can transfer your media files. Don't wait for the window to pass.
- Share your pictures and documents. Have copies of your files, documents, video DVDs, and pictures in several locations (i.e. your home, your brother's home, and maybe an aunt's home). By so doing, there will be a copy of all or most of your treasured documents and pictures in the event of a disaster.
- Keep your documents, media, and photos in a moderate environment.
- If you store your documents in a page protector, make sure it is safe for documents and put an acid free sheet of paper between the front and back documents.
- Scan or copy your newspaper articles. Newspapers are full of acid and they will yellow and fade.
- When possible, use the Rich Text Format (RTF) for your documents. Most word processors support RTF. Word processors come and go, but RTF seems to be a standard.
- Save your pictures in high resolution. Shoot your pictures with FINE or SUPER FINE settings.
- Organize your documents and photos and prioritize which needs attention first.
- Start now. You may not get everything done all at once. You need to at least start the process.
- Organize as families and ask others to help you preserve your documents.
- Store photos and documents in acid free boxes.
- Realize that what you do now will keep valuable family history safe for future generations.

You may find the following links helpful:

<http://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/photo.html>

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/brochure/Family%20Photos%20Text%2001.pdf>

Here are some excerpts from them.

Preventing Deterioration:

Keep photographic materials at proper environmental conditions. Relative humidity is the single most important factor in preserving most photographic materials. Relative humidity levels above 60% will accelerate deterioration. Low and fluctuating humidity may also damage them. Conditions of around 68° F and 30-40% relative humidity are appropriate and easiest to maintain in enclosed areas, such as an interior closet or an air-conditioned room -- not in an attic or basement. High temperatures and high relative humidity levels will accelerate deterioration.

Temperature, not relative humidity, is the controlling factor in the stability of contemporary color photographs. Storage at low temperatures (40°F or below) is recommended. Appropriate enclosures for cold storage are available from various vendors.

Exposure to visible and ultraviolet (UV) light is potentially damaging to photographs. Light can cause embrittlement, yellowing and color fading in prints and hand-colored surfaces. Extended display of photographs is not recommended; however if they must be displayed, use UV-filtering plastic or glass in framing. Exposure of color slides to the light in the projector should be kept to a minimum. Use duplicate slides instead.

Atmospheric pollutants, particularly sulfur compounds, will cause black and white images to fade and discolor. Gas by-products given off by fresh paint fumes, plywood, deteriorated cardboard and many cleaning supplies may cause accelerated image deterioration. Storage in non-acidic containers is recommended.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS . . .

Disaster preparedness begins by evaluating the storage location and the potential for damage in the event of a flood, fire, or other disaster. It is vital that you create a disaster preparedness plan that addresses the specific needs of the photo collection before a disaster occurs. The location and manner in which photographs are housed can be the first line of defense. Identify photographic materials that are at higher risk of damage or loss. Remove all potentially damaging materials such as paper clips and poor-quality enclosures. Store negatives and prints in separate locations to decrease the possibility of an image being destroyed forever in a catastrophe.

If a disaster does occur, stay calm. If possible, protect the collection from damage by covering it with plastic sheeting and/or removing it from the affected area. Evaluate the situation and document the damage that has occurred. Contact a conservator as soon as possible for assistance and advice on the recovery and repair of damaged materials.

Handling Photographic Materials:

If photographs are handled improperly, they can suffer disastrous damage, including tears, cracks, losses, abrasions, fingerprints, and stains. Avoid touching fragile photographic materials; salts in human perspiration may damage surfaces. Wear clean cotton gloves if possible when handling negatives and prints.

Digital Scrapbooking

Digital scrapbooking is rapidly replacing the traditional means of making a scrapbook. With digital scrapbooking, you do not have to cut up precious photos or memories. Rather you can scan in the photos or information into your computer. Then you can create lovely pages that you can print photographically. Additional advantages include the ability to have many electronic copies of your work to share with family, the ability to journal information directly on the scrapbook page, and a thin and easy way to store a treasured product once you have completed it.

In order to do digital scrapbooking, you will need software that helps you manipulate your images. Some are inexpensive; others are more expensive. Many people use the Adobe Photoshop series. This is a professional program that is used by professional photographers and amateurs alike. However, the Adobe Photo Element series will serve your purpose just fine at far less cost. There will be a learning curve with any of the programs until you are familiar with the various options. Once you learn the program, you will be ready to create your scrapbooks. There are many sources online now where you can purchase for minimal cost graphics such as bows, hearts, ribbons, etc. that will add to your scrapbook pages. There are digital scrapbooking clubs and blogs that discuss techniques of digital scrapbooking. Do an Internet search for digital scrapbooking and see the large number of entries.

Many people like to put their photos into a digital slideshow saved on a DVD for viewing on the television. The Pitchers have searched long and hard for a user-friendly program that will allow the author to add music, voiceover messages, and save the program in a format that will allow for TV viewing. There is one that we found that meets all of the above criteria. It is **DVD Slideshow Builder Deluxe by Wondershare**. When we initially decided to purchase the program after having tried a trial version, we panicked. It was a company out of China. We were somewhat concerned about sending out our credit card information to China. We did purchase this program, however, and it is one of the best purchases we have made. We have since bought other programs from them. NOTE: Tech support is only by e-mail and is often not in the greatest English. There aren't very many problems with the program, however. Video clips can also be included in the presentation if desired.

Another option that is becoming increasingly more popular is professionally-printed photo books. Recently My Publisher has merged with Shutterfly and they have combined the best of both businesses. Now you can select from a number of templates, design your book with the number of pages you would desire, select the paper quality, add as much journaling as you would desire, and have a very professional product when finished. The actual turn-around time is about 10 days. This company is an online company and is available at <http://www.mypublisher.com/>. Watch their website. Often they offer "buy one—get one free" specials. This makes it very affordable if you want multiple copies to share with family. They make great Christmas gifts.

Each of these ways provides the satisfaction that their heirloom photos and information are preserved for future generations.

Organizing your Family History:

A tip we learned from a long-time friend involved our own personal information such as birth certificates, passports, Social Security cards, etc. Purchase a three-ring binder of reasonable size. Also purchase acid-free page protectors. In this binder, you will store all documents that are important to your family. (Certainly it is well to also scan these documents and have them off site for additional protection.) Include in the binder pictures of each household member. Using dividers, divide the binder into sections for each household member. Whenever something important comes along, add it to the binder. Be sure to keep the binder in a handy well-known spot. In the event of evacuation or disaster, the binder is easily accessible and can be taken immediately without searching for it.

As you progress in your family history endeavor, you will acquire many documents related to your ancestral research. If you already have an organizational system in place that works for you, that's great. Use it. If you are just starting out and would like to have an easier system than just throwing you documents in a box for later use, one method stands out. It is known as the Mary Hill method. In this packet we will only give a summary of her idea.

Her organization is based on colored tabbed folders. Starting with you (if you are single this would expand to your parents; if "you" includes a marriage this would expand based on you being a couple), there will be four lines to follow—Your father's line, your mother's line, your spouse's father's line and your spouse's mother's line. Designate a color for each line and strictly adhere to that color. Then if you are doing research on, say, your father's line and you find a document of interest put it in the designated colored folder with the person's name on the tab. File the folders according to the colors. At a glance, then, you will see all of the green folders, all of the red folders, all of the yellow folders and all of the blue ones. Each will signal to you a specific line. As you continue, you can refine your filing system based on ancestral families. For example, all documents related to your father's grandfather's family would go into one folder. Your mother's parents' family would go into another. This method makes document retrieval much easier because you know the family you are considering.

There may be other effective methods. Look at the ones that will serve you best.

Presenter Contact Information:

Mike and Nancy Pitcher
1841 Camrose
Idaho Falls, Id 83402
(208) 529-2392

Mike's e-mail: p1tcher@cablone.net

Nancy's e-mail: poppie@cablone.net

Future generations will be blessed because of your efforts now.