

Belnap Family Organization

*Keeping Your Keepsakes:
Archivally Preserving
Your Family's Past*

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Why Preserve?

- To maintain or realize monetary value
- Sentimentality / to “hold onto”
- Family history / record-keeping
- To “enlarge memory”

Alma 37:1-2

“And now, my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me; And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them; for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept. . . .

Alma 37:3-4

“And these plates of brass, which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning—Behold, it has been prophesied by our fathers, that they should be kept and handed down from one generation to another, and be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon. . . .

Alma 37:5-6

“And now behold, if they are kept they must retain their brightness; yea, and they will retain their brightness; yea, and also shall all the plates which do contain that which is holy writ. Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise. . . .

Alma 37:7-8

“And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls. And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.”

What Can Be Preserved?

- Paper Items: Letters, Documents, News Articles, etc.
- Photographs and Slides
- Audio and Video Recordings
- Textiles
- Artwork and Prints
- Glass and Ceramics
- Jewelry and Other Valuables
- Furniture / Other Household Items
- Organic Materials (Hair, Flowers, etc.)
- “Born” Digital Media

What *Should* Be Preserved?

Not everything is worth holding onto. It is emotionally and psychologically necessary to “let go” of items once their usefulness has passed, their value has diminished, or their continued retention becomes debilitating (*e.g.*, “Buried Alive”).

The question therefore becomes, “What is ‘useful’?” “What is ‘valuable’?” “What is ‘non-burdensome’?”

The *science* of preservation must be balanced against the *art* of selective retention of items worthwhile to future generations.

Where To Start?

- Get organized! Put “like things together”
- Inventory your possessions
- Record the history of each item
- Conduct triage--first things first
- Develop a family “preservation plan”
- Acquire archival materials
- Seek expert assistance as needed

Preservation No-No's

- Light
- Temperature
- Fire / Heat
- Water / Relative Humidity
- Pests
- Pollutants
- PVC Plastics
- “Permanent” (think: decoupage)

A Few More Preservation Don'ts

- Avoid food / grease / soiled hands
- Avoid certain inks
- Avoid sloppy filing / poor organization
- Avoid overall “carelessness”

“Voldemort” Practices

- Permanent glues and adhesives
- “Magnetic” or self-stick albums
- Regular glass picture frames / acid matting
- Direct sunlight
- Attic / basement storage
- Storage on floors, near windows, near heating and water heaters, etc.

Some Preservation Do's

- Ensure any treatment is reversible: “Don’t laminate, encapsulate”
- Keep originals when feasible, “just in case”
- Use acid-free papers and non-PVC (non-“smelly”) plastics—polyethylene, polypropylene
- Minimize UV exposure
- Consider displaying copies over originals
- Avoid tannins and lignins; *e.g.*, untreated cardboard, newsprint, wood, etc.

More Preservation Do's

- Minimize dust; maximize clean air / circulation
- Avoid “overstuffing” albums, boxes, drawers, etc.
- Maintain barriers; avoid “bleed” or “migration”
- Identify items with archival labels / captions
- Consider preserving “context”
- Keep up with current technology
- Back up, back up, back up!

Selected Archival Resources

- <http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com/>
- <http://www.universityproducts.com/>
- <http://www.archival.com/>
- <http://www.larsendigital.com/>
- <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/>

Alma 37:8

“[T]hese things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, . . . and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.”



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