

Caring for Photos, Albums, and Scrapbooks

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American Ancestors
by NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Why are photos important?

- Putting a face to your genealogical research
- Captures a moment in history
- May provide clues to your research
- Tool to interest family and a next generation of family historians

Glossary of Terms

- Photograph - An image produced by exposing a prepared light-sensitive surface to light (refers to both the positive and negative)

Photographs



Brief History of Photography *(pre-digital)*

Knowing Your History

- Dating of unidentified/unmarked photos
- Identifying the type of photograph informs preservation and storage
- Important when donating items to a repository

Daguerreotype



- Popular 1839-1860's
- Cased photograph
- Each daguerreotype is a unique positive (no negative was produced)

Cyanotype



- Created in 1842
- Potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate
- Essentially the same thing as a blue print
- Easy to identify!

Ambrotype



- Popular 1854-1860's
- Collodion emulsion on glass
- Cased photograph (usually)

Tintype (aka Ferrotype)



- Patented in 1856
- Wet collodion emulsion on lacquered iron plate base
- Sometimes placed in a Union case; can be confused with Ambrotypes

The Daguerreian Society Quarterly

About Us » Daguerreian Society Quarterly

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The Society's *Quarterly* is published four times a year and features over twenty-four pages of 19th-century images, articles of interest, Society and Photography news, and reviews of recent publications and exhibits. Classified and display advertisements are available, as well as research inquiries for Society members.

The Daguerreian Society Quarterly will be published in PDF format starting in 2016, but printed copies can be purchased at an additional charge with membership dues.

As a sample we offer the Jan.-March 2016 issue here.

Articles Needed:

If you have an idea for a short article (up to four-five pages in length) for the Quarterly, the Publications Committee would be happy to review it for possible publication in the Quarterly, or, if more appropriate, in the Annual. Article inquiries can be sent or emailed to our offices. Remember that the Society is interested in quality articles on all areas of 19th-century photography, not just daguerreotypes. Hard copy or high quality jpegs (300 dpi) of original images should accompany any article. They should be of sufficient size to be run in actual size in the publication.

Research Queries:

If you have a **research query** we would be happy to publish it in our next *Journal* (there is no charge). Research

Sign In

[Sign In securely](#)

[Haven't registered yet?](#)

Latest News

[more](#)

6/20/2017

[Bill Becker Named to the Board](#)

5/6/2017

[Save These Dates for our 19th-century Photography Conference and Show: October 26-29, 2017](#)

Calendar

[more](#)

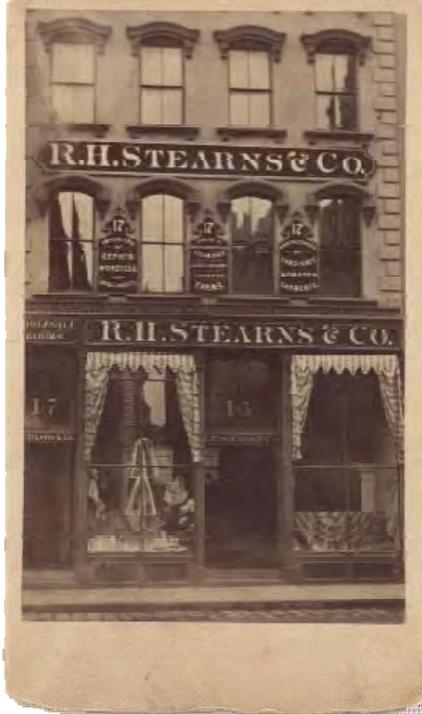
4/7/2018 » 4/8/2018

[2018 New York Photography Fair](#)

Online Surveys

www.daguerre.org

Carte-de-Visite (CDV)



- Patented in 1854
- Popular 1860's
- Multiple copies created for visits to friends and family; business associates; customers
- Usually albumen print on card 4 x 2.5 inches

Stereograph

- Popular 1850's - 1920's
- Viewed through stereoscope for 3-D perspective
- *Easy to identify!*



Lantern Slide



- Popular 1860's - 1940's
- Wet collodion emulsion on glass base
- Typically viewed via “magic lantern” (a primitive projector)

Cabinet Card



- Popular 1870's-1880's
- Albumen, gelatin, and collodion emulsions used
- Usually include photographer and studio address

Platinum Print



- Popular 1890's
- Platinum Print ... *or is it?* (made to look like it)

Silver Gelatin Print

- Created in 1874; not popular until 1900-1930's
- Gelatin emulsion on paper base
- Moving into amateur photography with release of Kodak's Brownie camera



Nitrate Negative

- Released in 1930's
- **HIGHLY** combustible



Acetate Negative

- Released in 1930's
- Chemically unstable
- Also known as Safety Film



Polyester Negative



- Released in 1940's
- Most color photos will use a polyester base for the negative

Slide (35mm)



- Released 1940's
- Positive image on a transparent base
- Slide images were projected onto a screen

Internal Dye Diffusion Transfer



- 1972-2008
- Also known as Polaroids or Integral Film
- Easy to identify!

Kodachrome II



- Released in 1965; still popular today

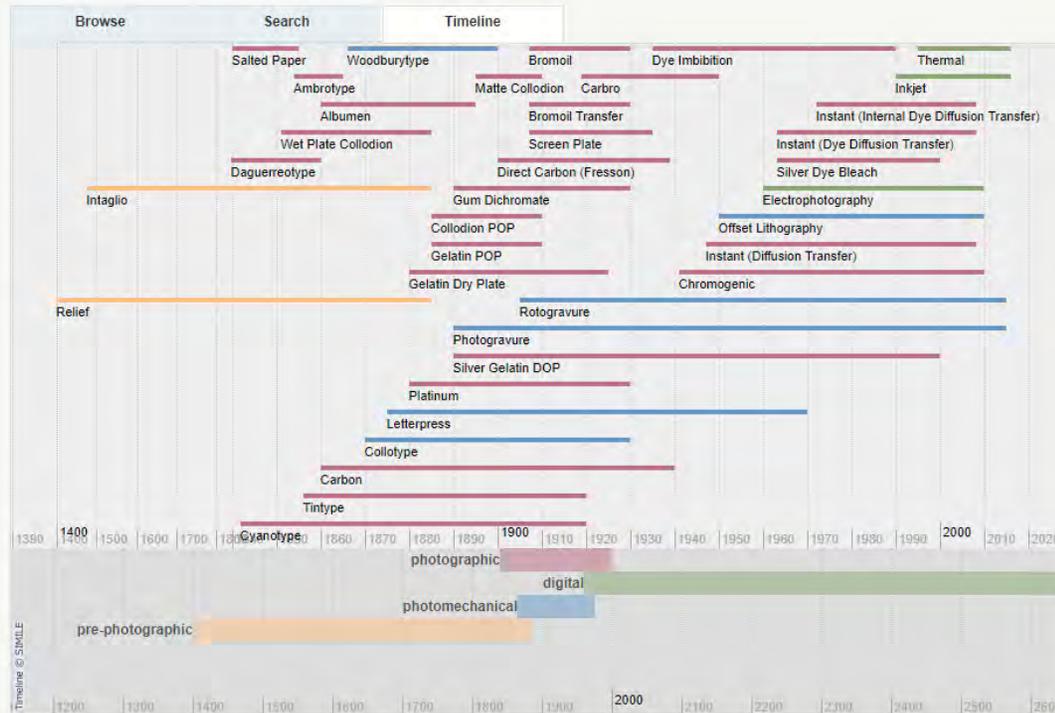
Dating Photographs

- What type of photograph is it?
- Stylistic elements
 - Border
 - Tinting
 - Tax stamp
 - Subject matter (fashion)
- Studio/photographer directories



Choose a Process - *Guided Tour*

To begin, use one of the following search methods to select a process:



Photographic Collection Survey

Album/Box Description: _____ Number of Photos: _____ Date of Survey: _____

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS

Type	Quantity	Internal Threats	External Threats
Daguerreotype			
Cyanotype			
Ambrotype			
Tintype			
Carte-de-Visite			
Stereograph			
Cabinet card			
Platinum Print			
Silver Gelatin Print			
Polaroids			
Kodachrome II			
Other:			

NEGATIVES

Type	Quantity	Internal Threats	External Threats
Gelatin Dry Plate			
Nitrate			
Ambrotype			
Acetate			
Polyester			
Other:			

TRANSPARENCIES

Type	Quantity	Internal Threats	External Threats
Lantern slide			
Slide (35mm)			
Other:			

Professional help: *Will you need to consult an expert about any item?*

Additional Notes/Questions:

Photo Survey

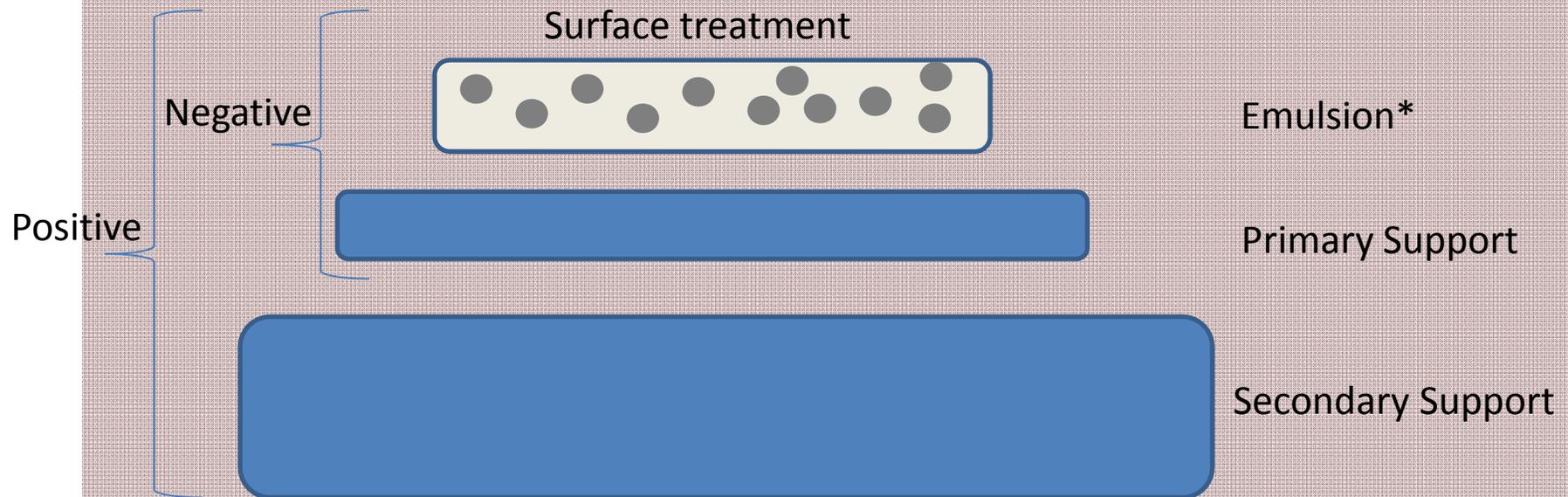
- One per box or photo album/scrapbook

Common Preservation Issues

Internal Threats

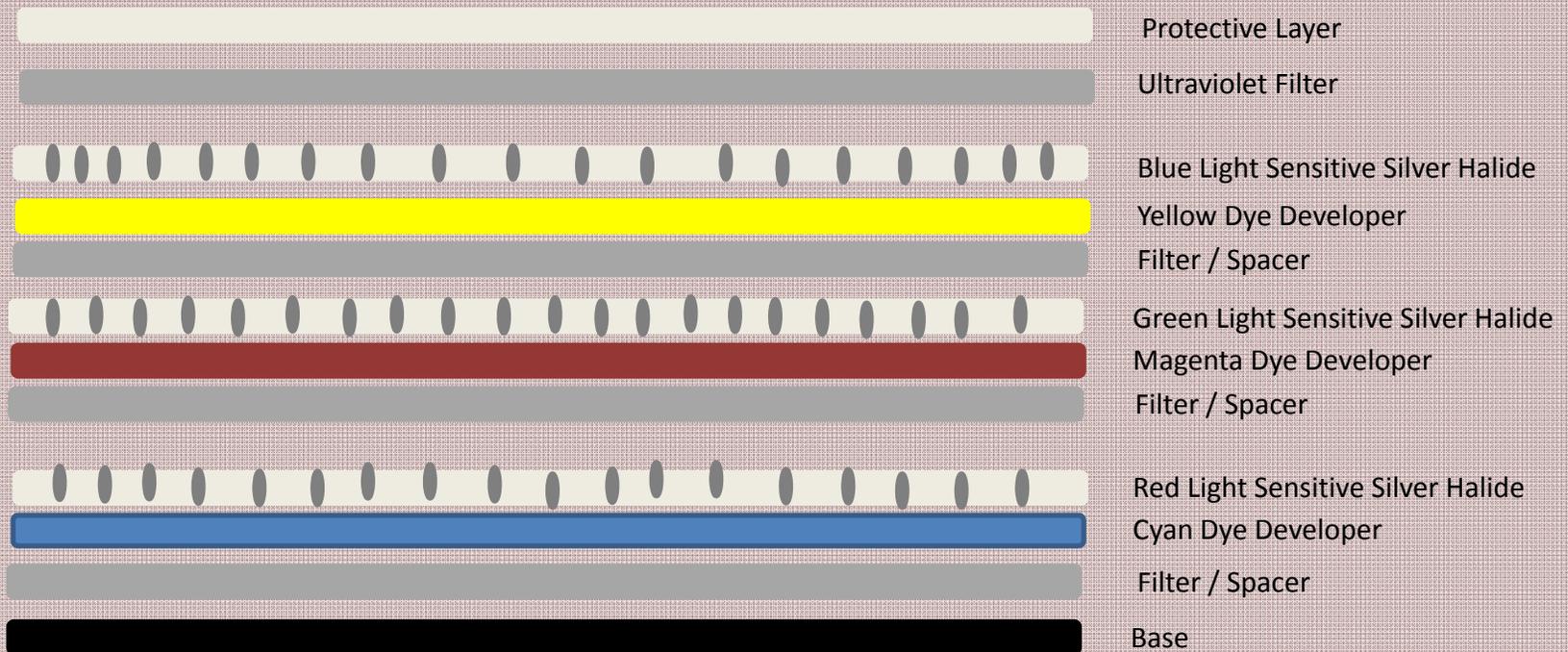
- Internal flaws - poor processing
- Materials used (ex: nitrate)
- Natural chemical breakdown (ex: egg whites)

B & W Photograph Structure

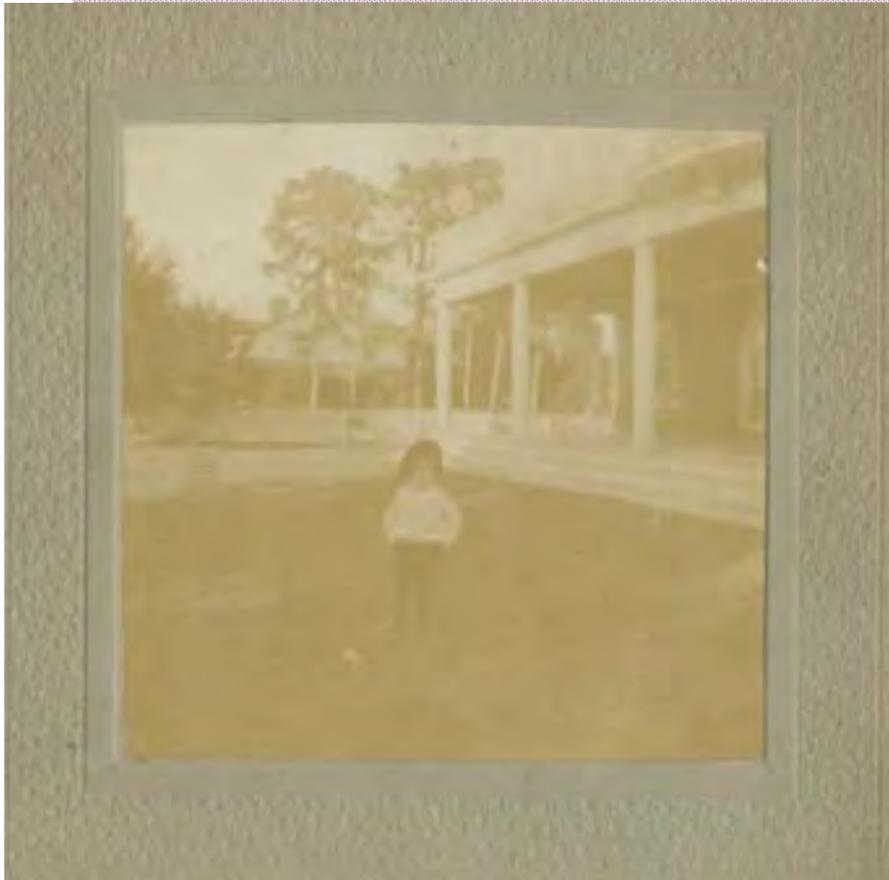


*Emulsion - a binder and image material (usually silver)

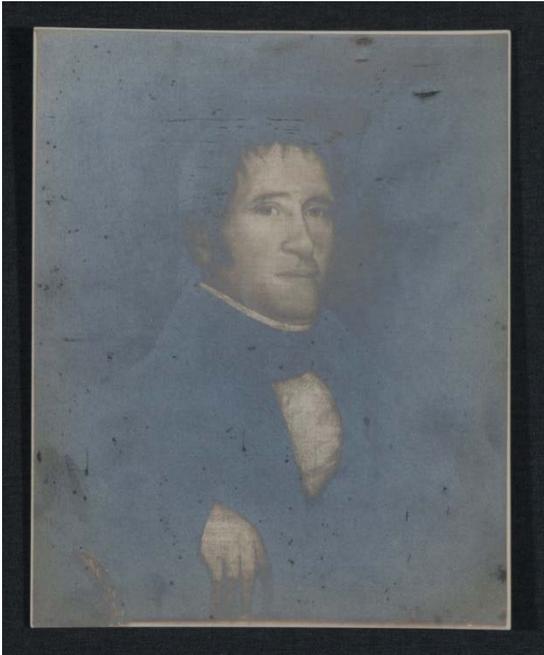
Color Photograph Structure



Sulfiding



- Chemical reaction causing sulfide to be produced; increased acidity
- Caused by residual fixer
- Result of poor processing



Mirroring

- Silver is ionized and free to move around the emulsion; reflects visible light
- Natural chemical reaction

Unstable Color Dye

- Blue dye fades resulting in color shift
- Chemically unstable material used



External Threats

- Environment
 - Temperature
 - Relative humidity
 - Light
 - Insects and animals
 - Disasters
- Poor handling



Mold

- Caused by temperature and high humidity
- Mold growing in the emulsion and will continue to get worse
- Separate from rest of your collection
- Consider conservator services





Rust

- Caused by high humidity and poor handling
- Will continue to get worse (flake) if not treated
- Should be stored separately

Tarnishing



- Exposed to oxygen from damaged case
- Can be treated by a conservator

Animals and Insects

- Burrowing into material, eating, nesting, shredding
- Be vigilant about checking on collection!
- Exterminate!



Poor Handling ...



- Failed attempts at preservation
- Taping
- Folding or rolling
- Finger prints
- Paper clips, staples, and rubber bands
- Lamination
- Cleaning

Preservation and Storage

Basic Preservation Principles

- Lay items flat
- Remove fasteners (paper clips, etc.)
- Remove sticky notes, etc.
- Separate items (cased and iron photos)
- Remove from old developing packets
- Remove from frame?

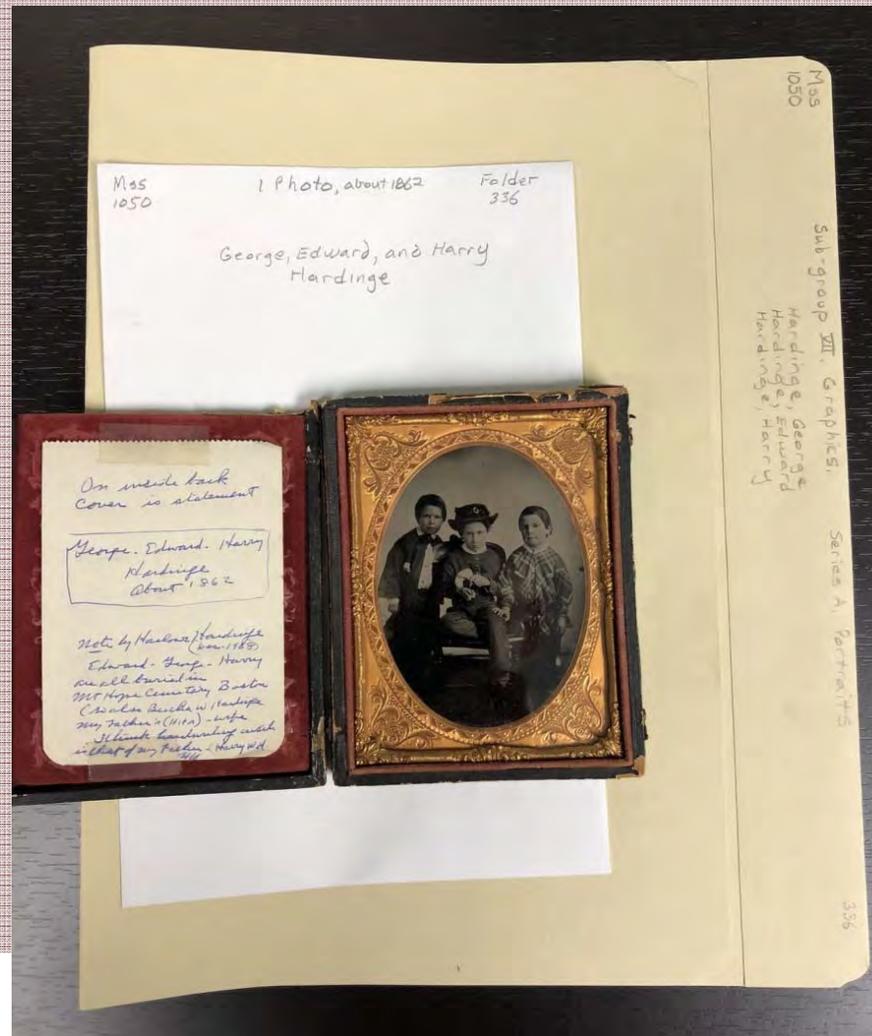
Basic Storage Principles

- Store photographs separate from papers
- Use archival paper or plastic enclosures
 - Use pH neutral envelopes (buffered materials can react negatively to certain photo types)
- Enclosures generally stored in folders
- Folders stored in boxes

Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Photo Albums and Scrapbooks

Unique Considerations

- It's an artifact!
 - Assembled by someone; assumption being it's in some order
 - Curated by an ancestor
- Multi-formats present unique preservation concerns
- Material of the album itself can cause issues
- To take apart or keep together?

When to Keep it Together

- Inclination is always to keep an item together
- Condition: Is it falling apart? Are the photos well attached? Is the binding intact?
- Photographer: Is it a prominent studio/photographer?

What would you do?



Taking it Apart

- What are the items attached to?
 - Disintegrating paper
 - Material of album
 - Use of adhesives
- Are there threats present that will continue to damage the items within?

Does this look familiar?



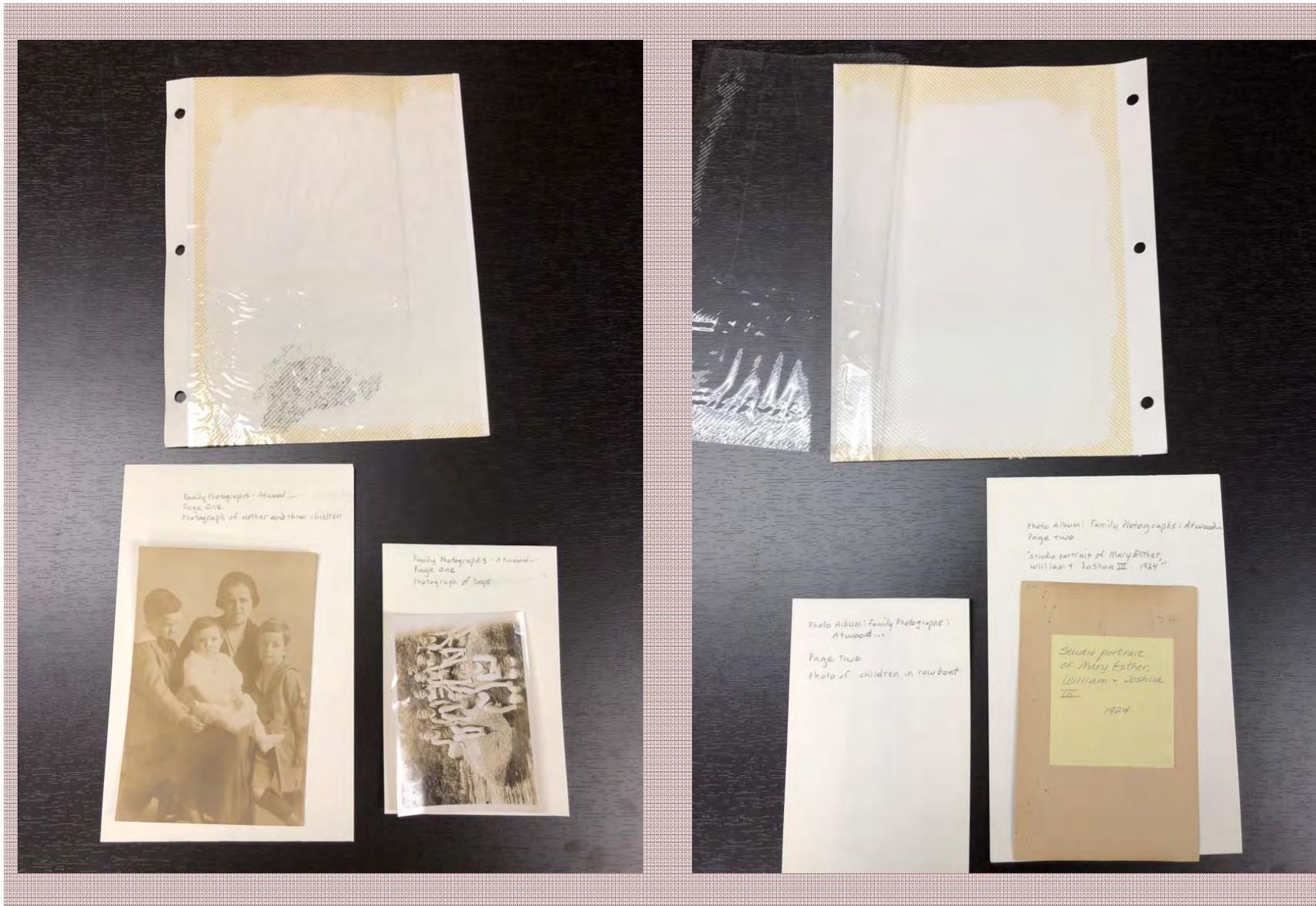
Documenting the Order

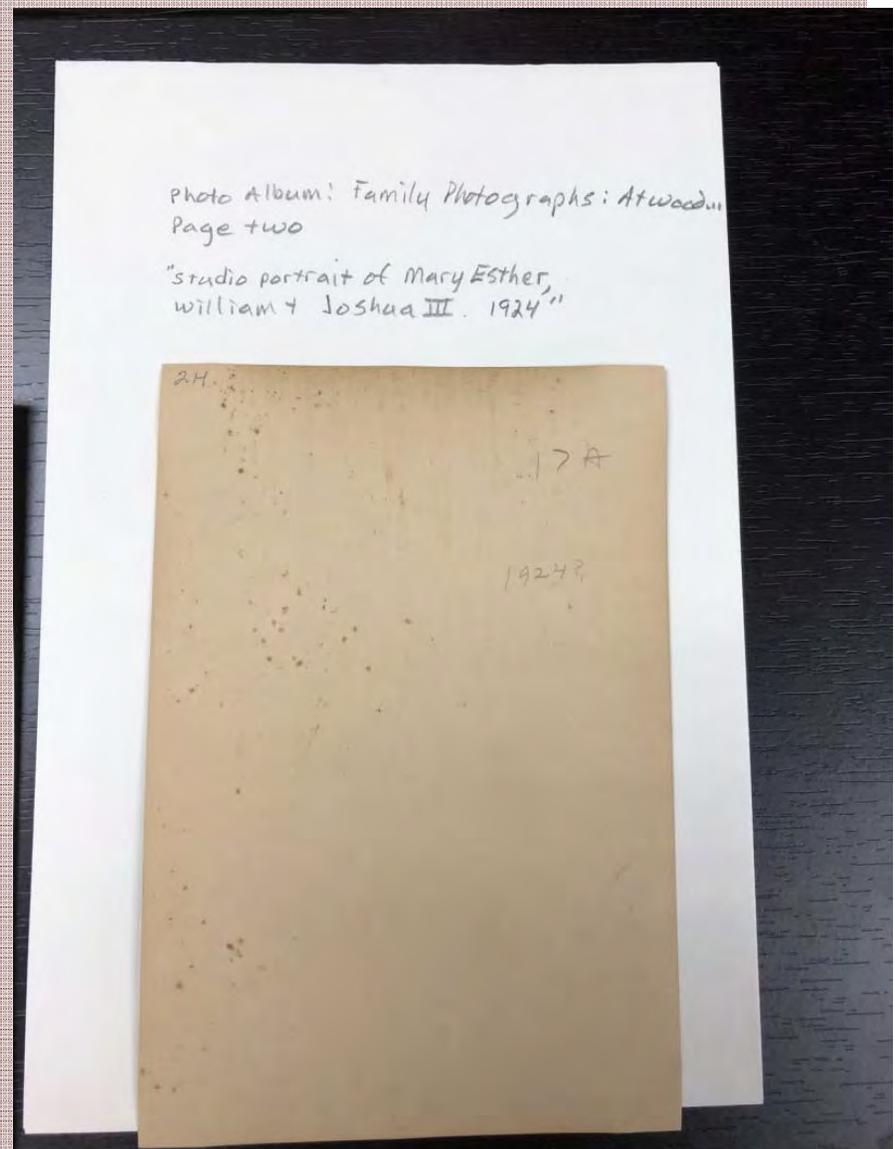
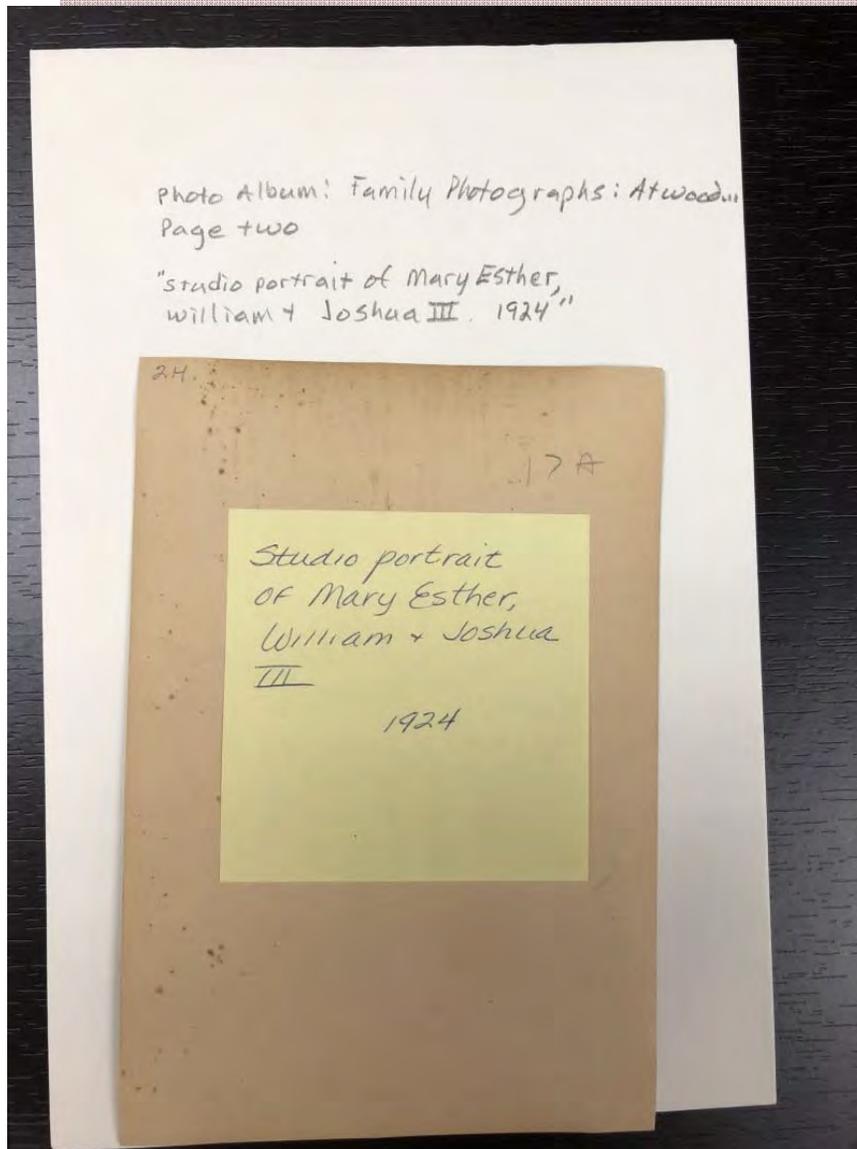
- ✓ Photograph each page (including front cover, inside front cover, inside back cover, back cover)
- ✓ Have storage supplies ready if possible
- ✓ Make note of loose items

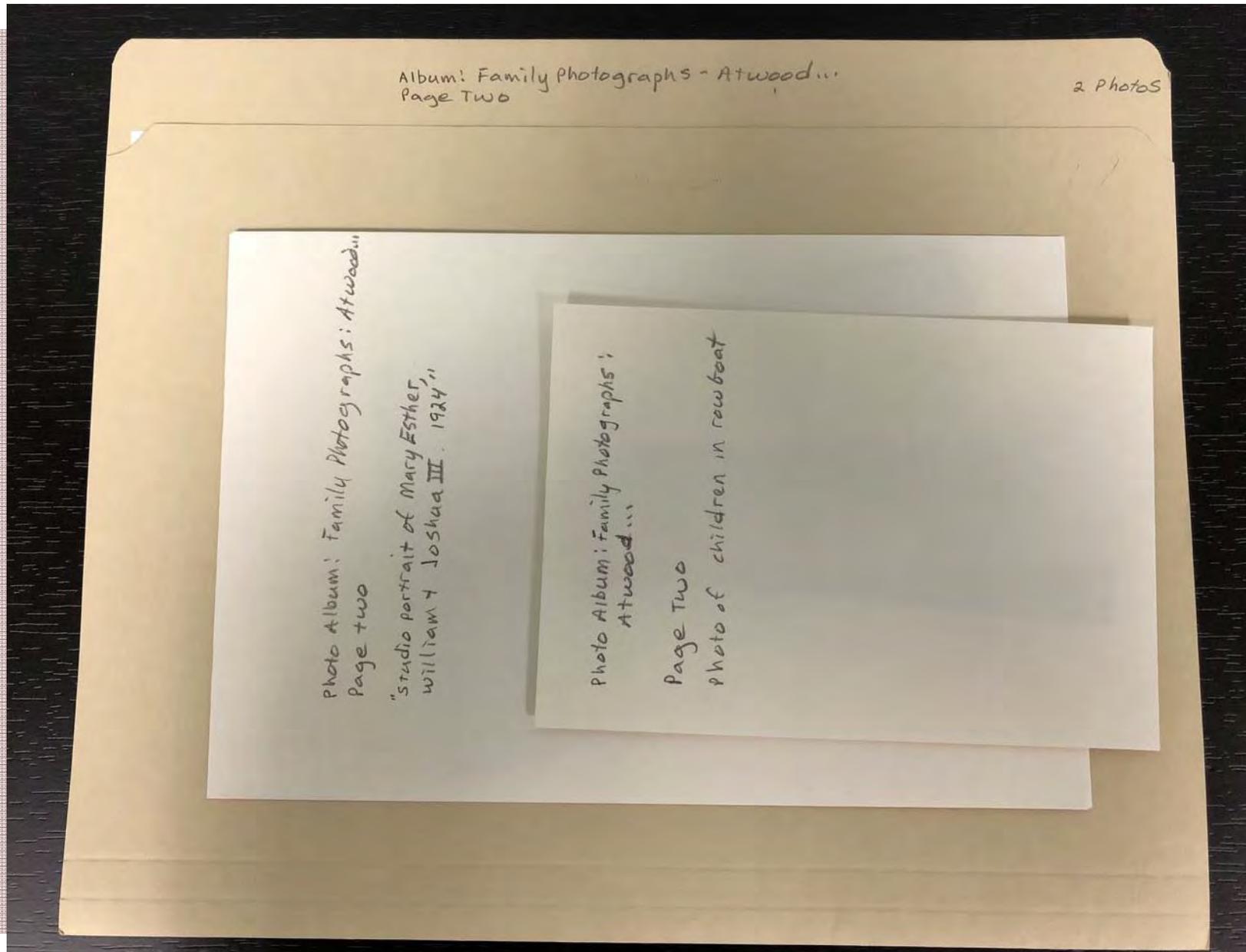
Tip

Document one page
at a time!









Album: Family Photographs - Atwood...
Page Two

2 Photos

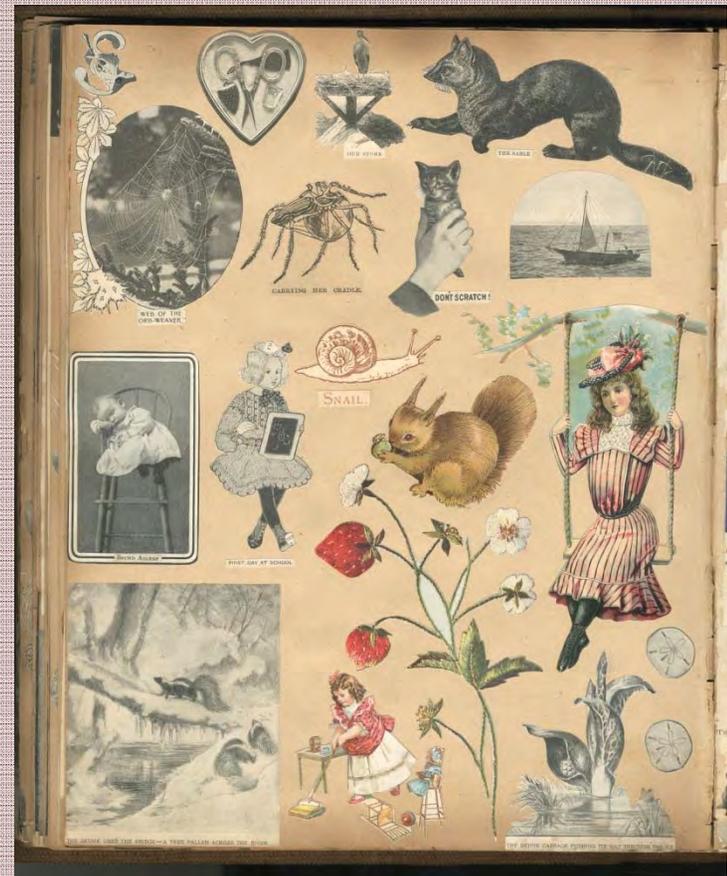
Photo Album: Family Photographs: Atwood...
Page two

"Studio portrait of Mary Esther,
William & Joshua III. 1924"

Photo Album: Family Photographs;
Atwood...

Page Two
photo of children in rowboat

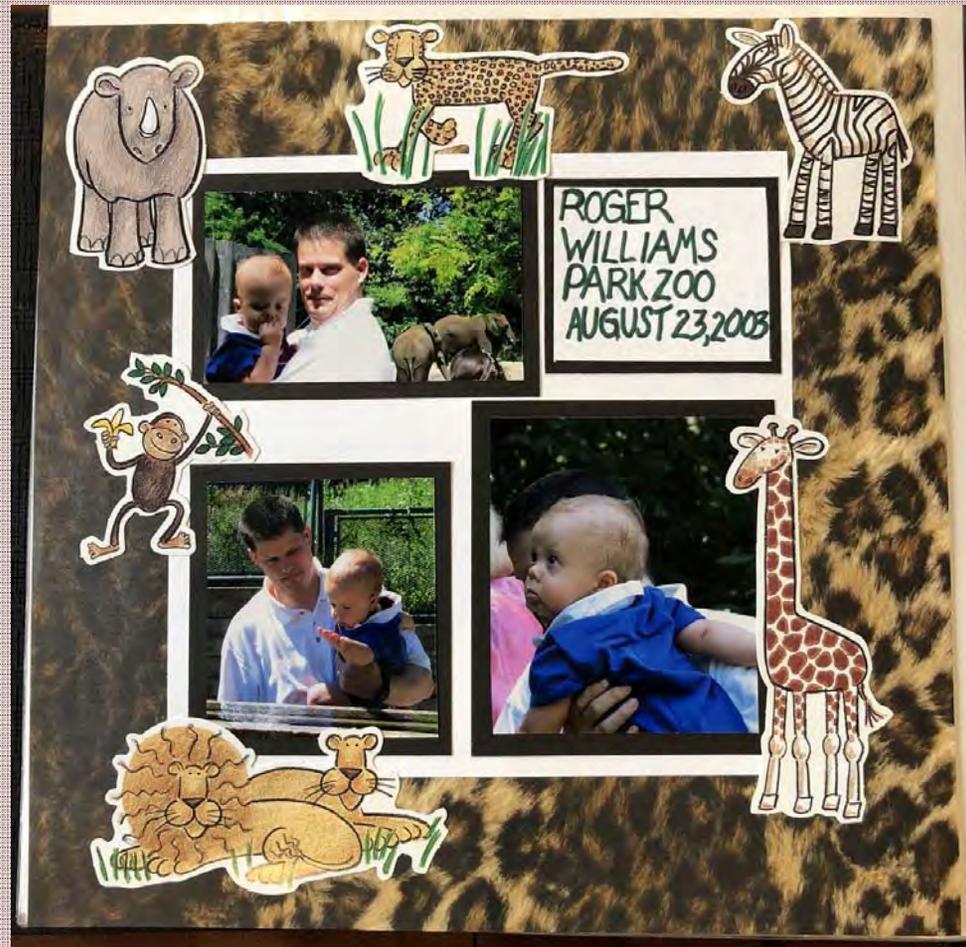
Scrapbooks



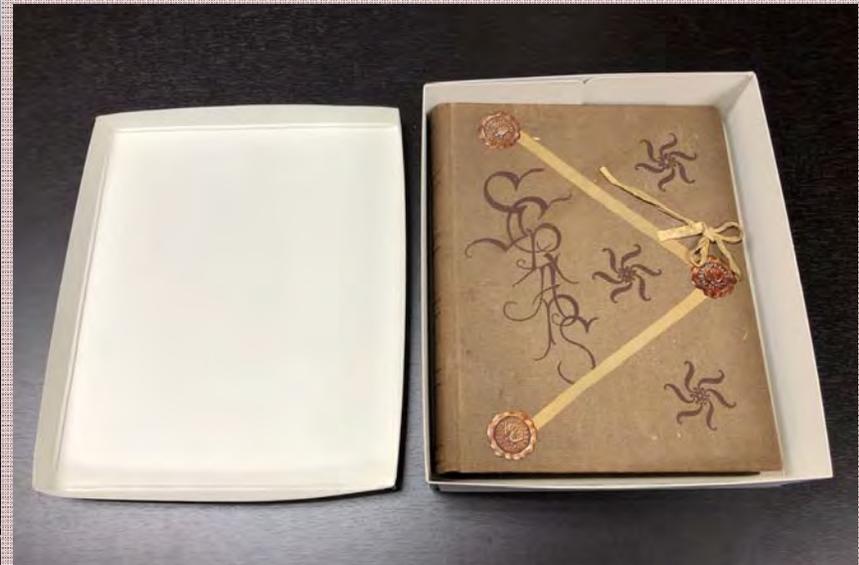
Scrapbooks



Scrapbooks



Storage Options



The screenshot shows the website for the Northeast Document Conservation Center. The header includes the organization's name and a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT, WORKING WITH NEDCC, PHOTO LIBRARY, SUPPORTERS, CROWDFUNDING, and CONTACT. Below the header is a row of service categories: BOOK CONSERVATION, PAPER CONSERVATION, PHOTOGRAPH CONSERVATION, ASIAN ART CONSERVATION, IMAGING SERVICES, AUDIO PRESERVATION, ASSESSMENTS AND CONSULTATIONS, and PRESERVATION TRAINING. A secondary navigation bar features buttons for PRESERVATION LEAFLETS, DISASTER ASSISTANCE, and FREE RESOURCES, along with a search bar and social media icons.

The main content area is titled 'PRESERVATION 101' and contains a sidebar menu with the following items: Welcome, Introduction, Session 1 (Introduction to Preservation), Session 2 (The Building and Environment), Session 3 (Caring for Collections), Session 4 (Caring for Paper Collections), Session 5 (Care and Handling of Photographs), Session 6 (Media Collections), Session 7 (Reformatting and Digitization), Session 8 (Emergency Preparedness), Session 9 (Building a Preservation Program), The Preservation Assessment, Additional Resources, and Credits. The 'Session 5' item is highlighted with a blue arrow.

The main content area for Session 5 is titled 'SESSION 5: CARE AND HANDLING OF PHOTOGRAPHS' and includes a sub-section 'STORING PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS'. The text reads: '1 Prints | 2 Negatives | 3 Scrapbooks/Albums'. The main text states: 'All plastic and paper materials used to house and store valuable and heirloom photographs should pass the Photographic Activity Test (PAT), a test to detect image fading resulting from harmful chemicals in enclosures and to detect staining reactions between enclosures and gelatin, as specified in ISO 14523: 1999. Refer to NEDCC Preservation Leaflet [Storage Enclosures for Photographic Materials](#) for a full discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of paper and plastic storage enclosures as well as an examination of pH buffered vs. unbuffered paper materials in housing photographic collections.'

The sub-section '1 PRINTS' is titled 'Enclosures' and explains that photographic prints and negatives are best stored in individual enclosures to reduce damage by providing physical support and protection. Enclosures can be made of paper or plastic.

Paper enclosures:

- protect from light and buildup of moisture and gases inside the enclosure;
- require more handling, as the object must be removed from the enclosure for examination; and,
- are cheaper and easier to write on than plastic enclosures.

Plastic enclosures:

- allow the user to view the image without handling it;

<https://www.nedcc.org/preservation101/session-5>

Storage Environment

Follow Industry Standards



Storage Environment

- Relative humidity 45-50%
- Temperature 60-70 F
- Store in a dark room/area to protect from UV
- Check periodically





THANK YOU!

AmericanAncestors.org/education