

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) that is then stabilized or fixed to the substrate using a photo-chemical process.

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

Our Mission

The Daguerreian Society is committed to advancing the understanding and appreciation of daguerreotypes and other early photographs. Our purpose is to inform and inspire our members, build a sense of community, and contribute to the scholarship and preservation of 19th-century photography. We fulfill this mission through a variety of publications, events and activities. Learn more about becoming a Member



The Daguerreian Society is the leading organization dedicated to the history, technology, art, and preservation of 19th-century photography.

Our international membership brings together photography collectors and dealers, museum professionals, historians, scientists, students, educators, photographers, and artists. A 501(c)3 nonprofit founded in 1988, The Daguerreian Society welcomes all who share an interest in early photography.

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



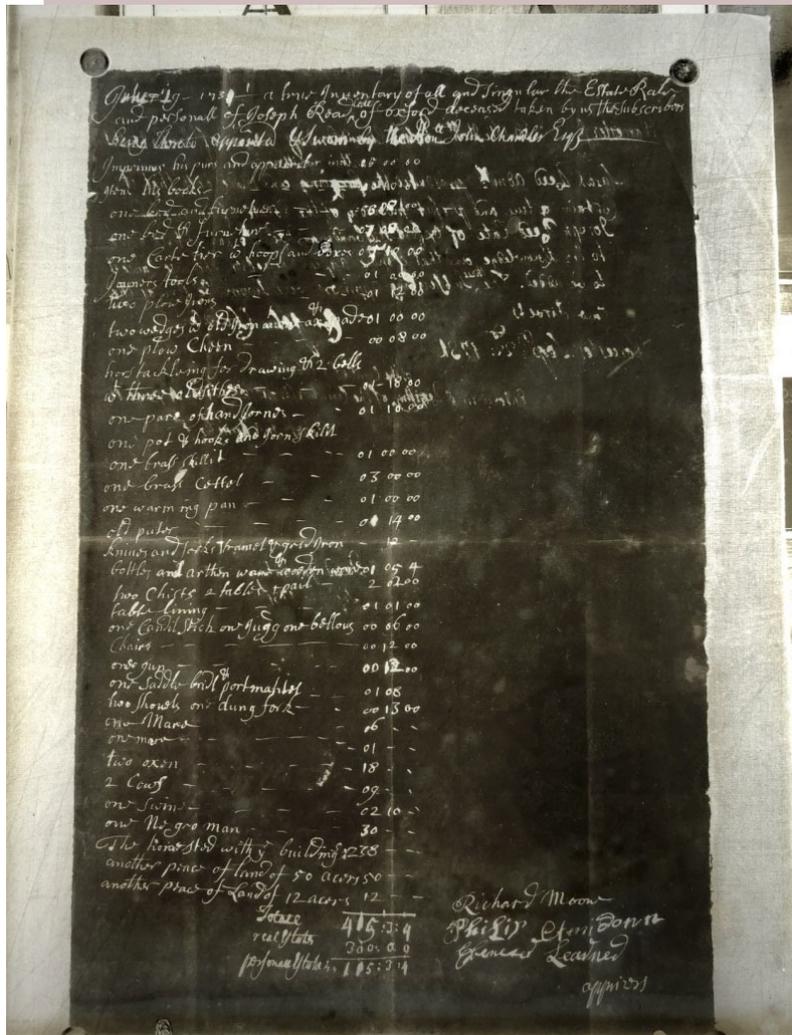
- Popular 1860's - 1940's
- Wet collodion emulsion on glass base
- Typically viewed via “magic lantern” (a primitive projector)

Cabinet Card



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

Gelatin Dry Plate



- Popular 1880-1925
- Gelatin emulsion on glass base
- A negative

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

- First developed in 1889 but in greatest use between 1910-1930s
- **HIGHLY** combustible



Acetate Negative

- Released in 1920's
- Chemically unstable
- Also known as Safety Film



Polyester Negative



- Released in 1950'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 1961
- No longer really in use
- Most photography is now digital

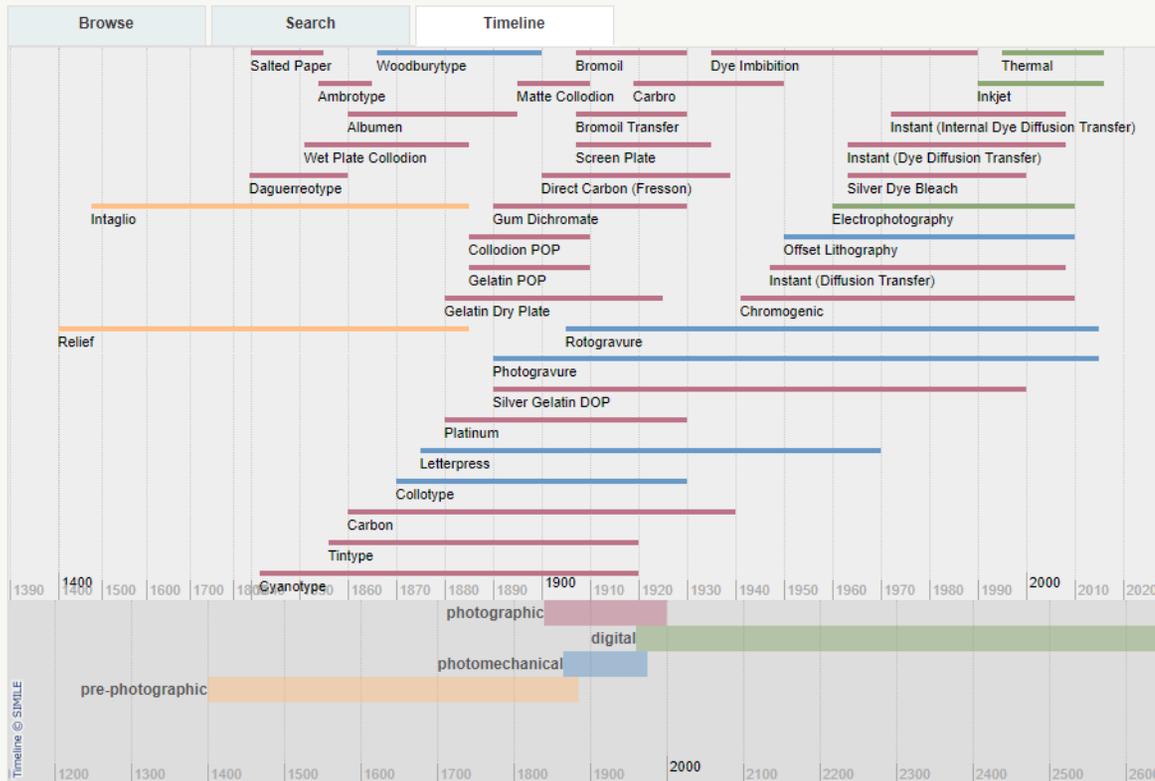
Dating Photographs

- 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

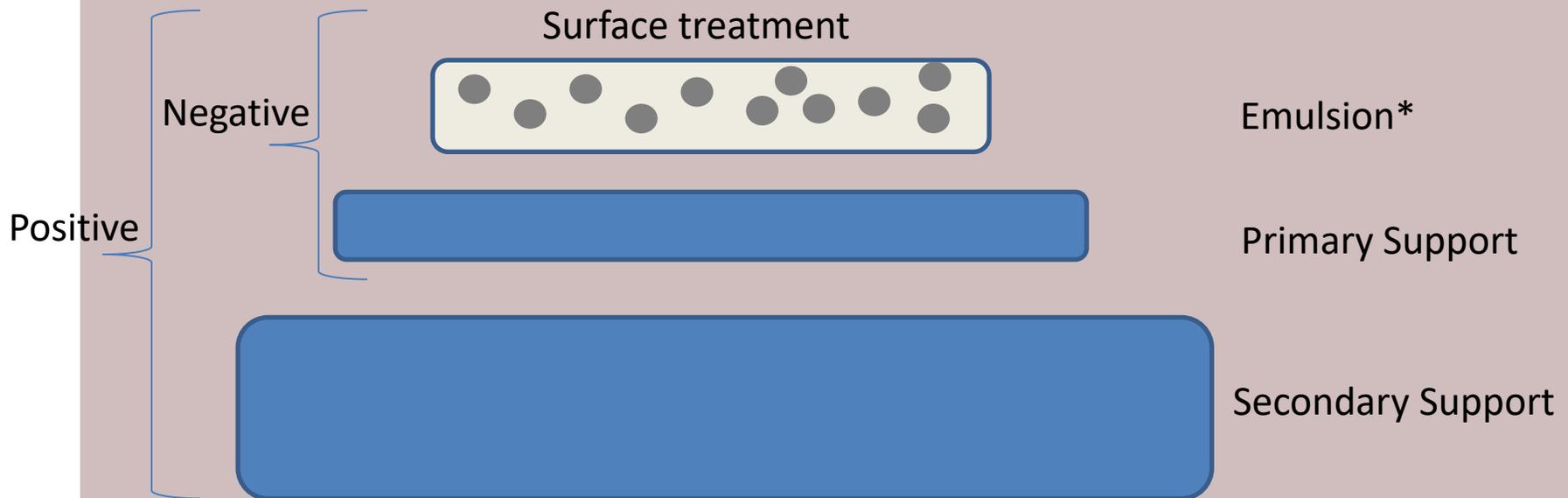
- One per box or photo album/scrapbook

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)

Sulfiding



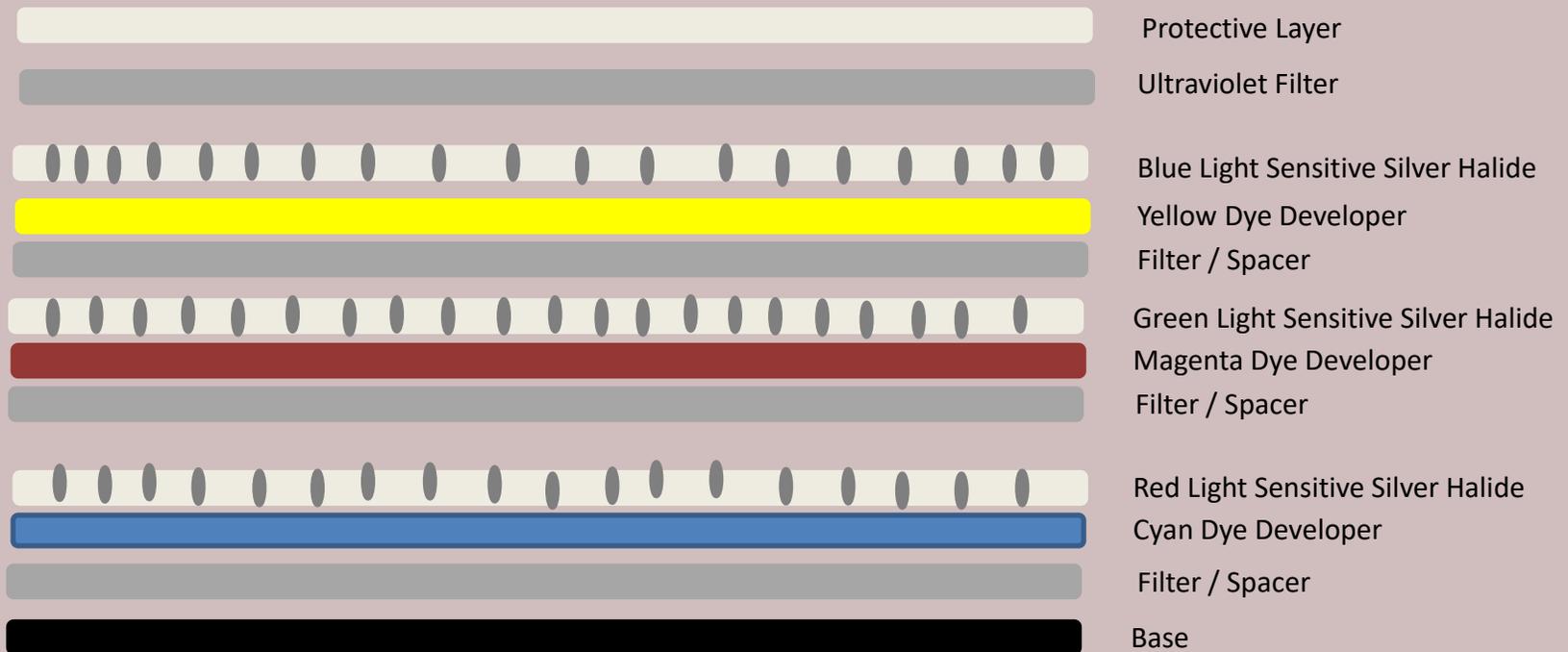
- Chemical reaction causing sulfide to be produced; increased acidity
- Caused by residual fixer
- Result of poor processing



Mirroring

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

Color Photograph Structure



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

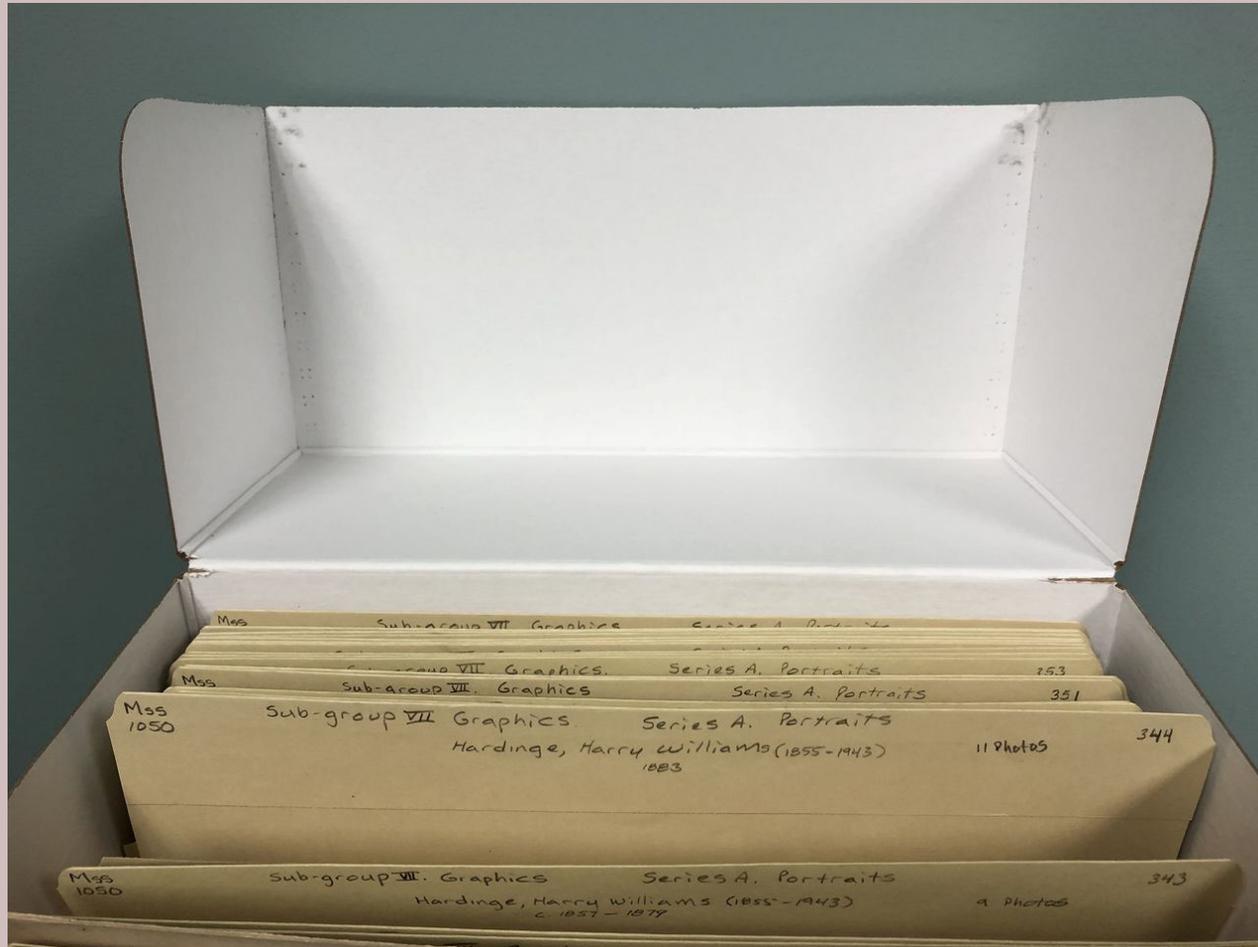
Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



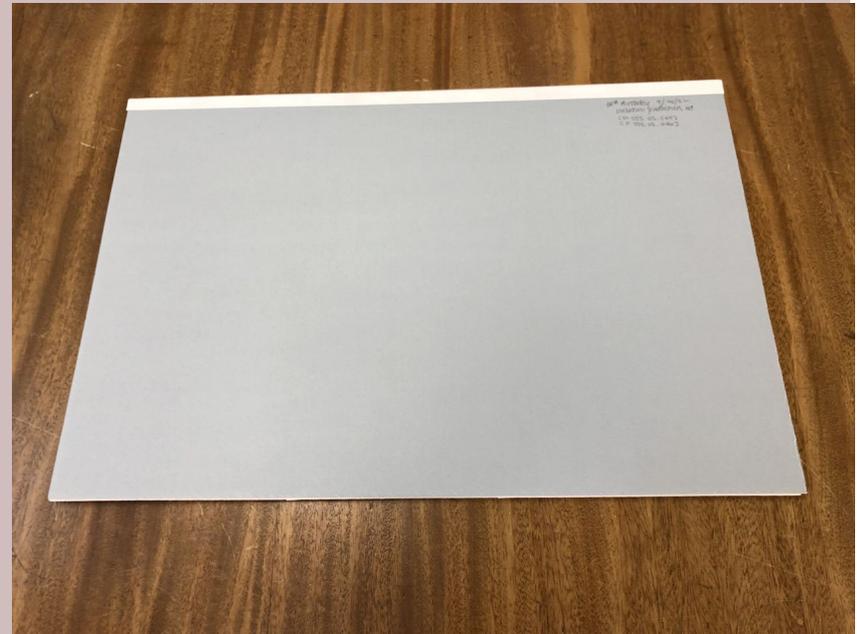
Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Storage Enclosure Options



Photo Albums and Scrapbooks

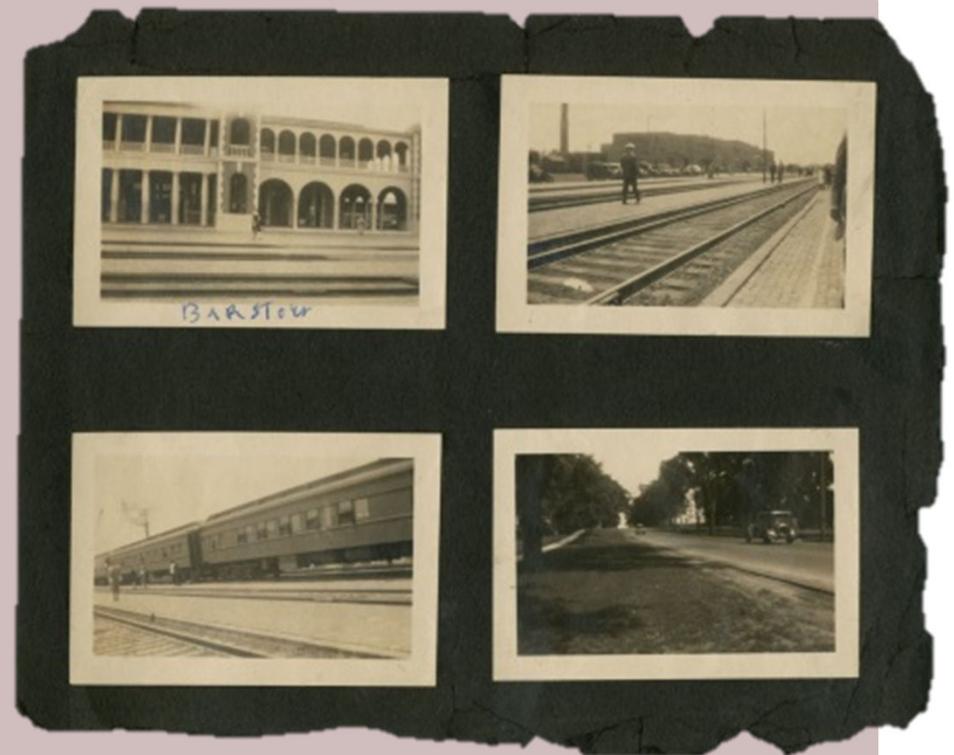
Unique Considerations

- 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?



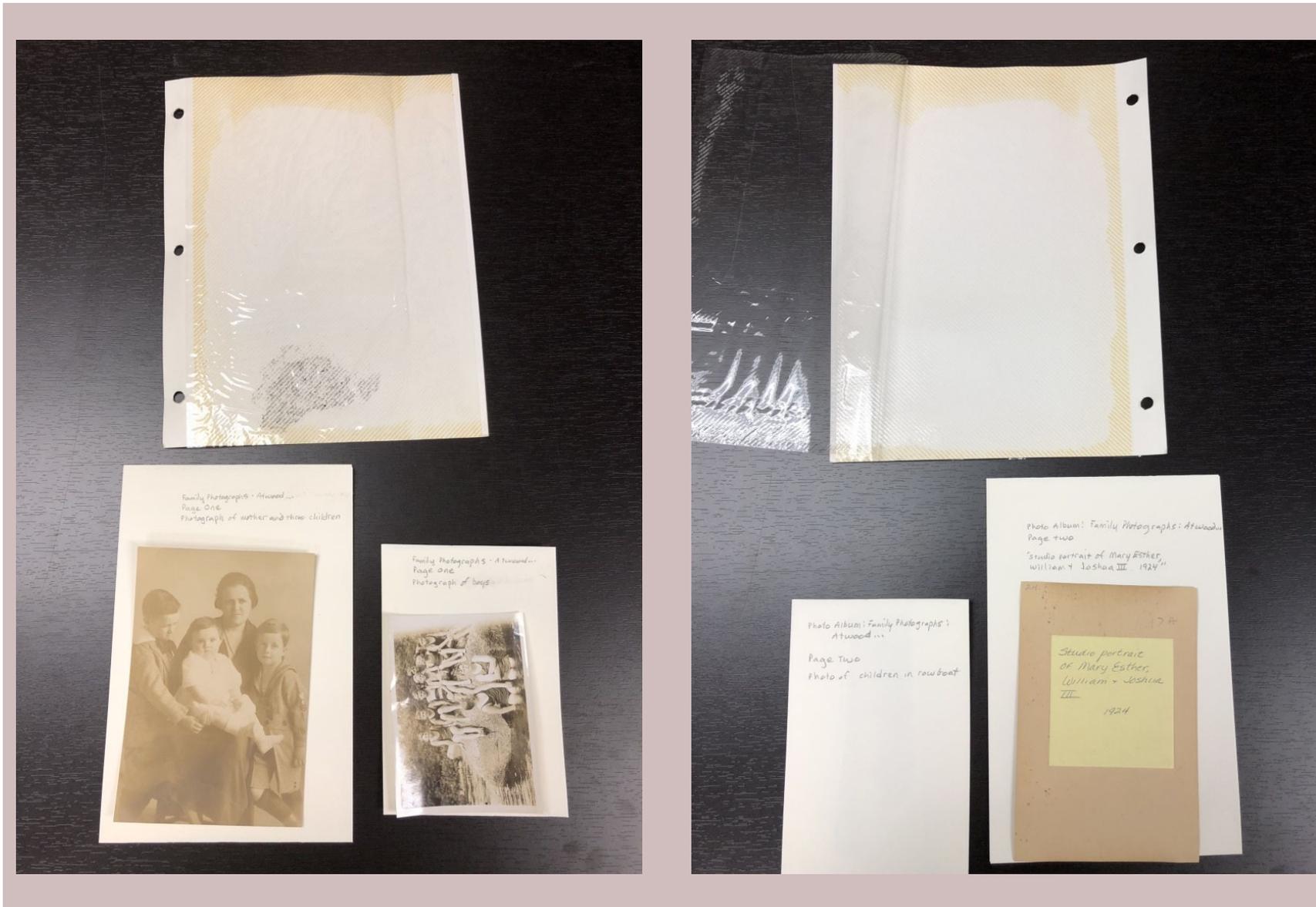
Documenting the Order

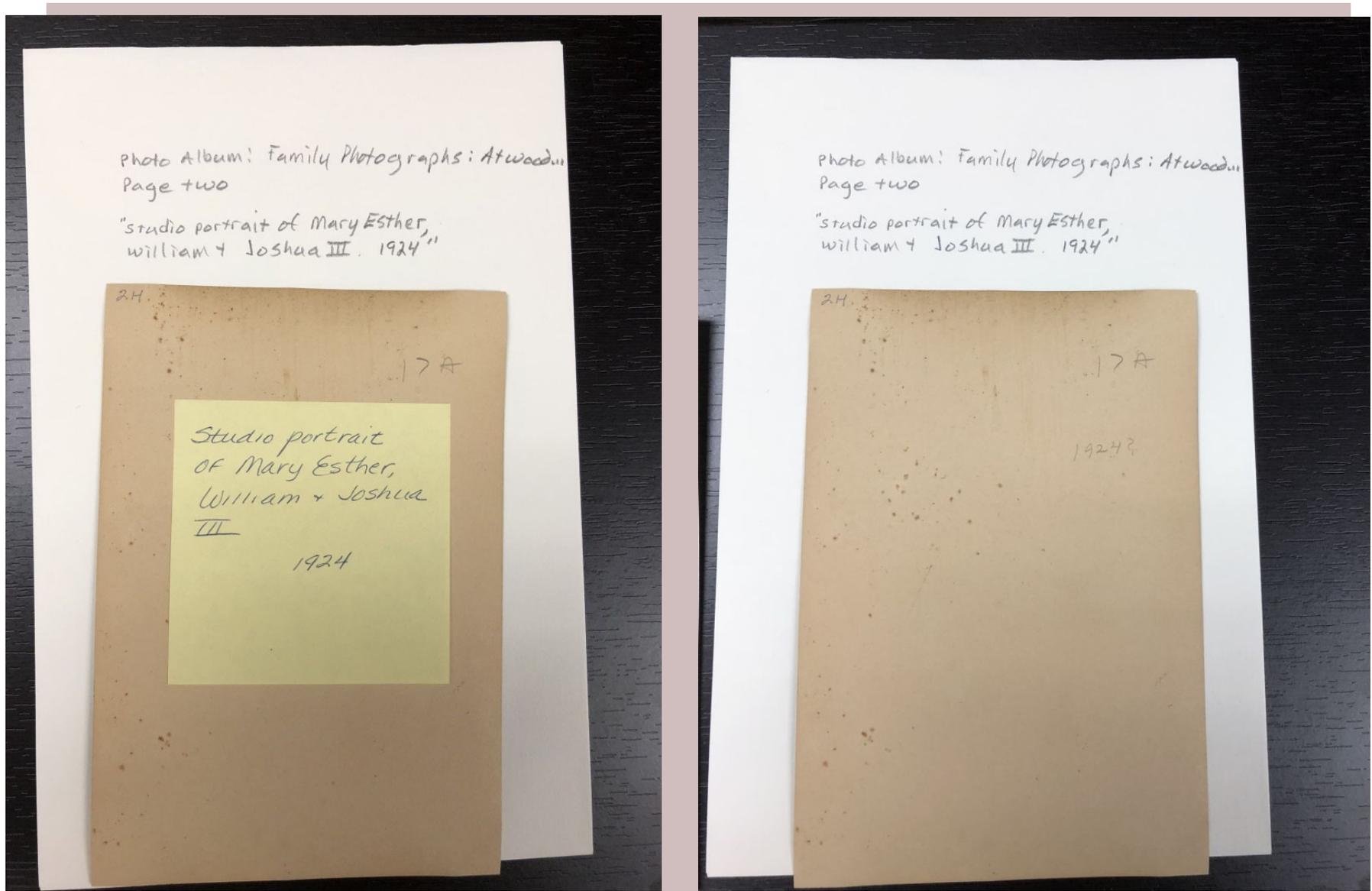
- ✓ Photograph each page (including front cover, inside front cover, inside back cover, back cover)
- ✓ Have storage supplies ready if possible
- ✓ Make note of loose items

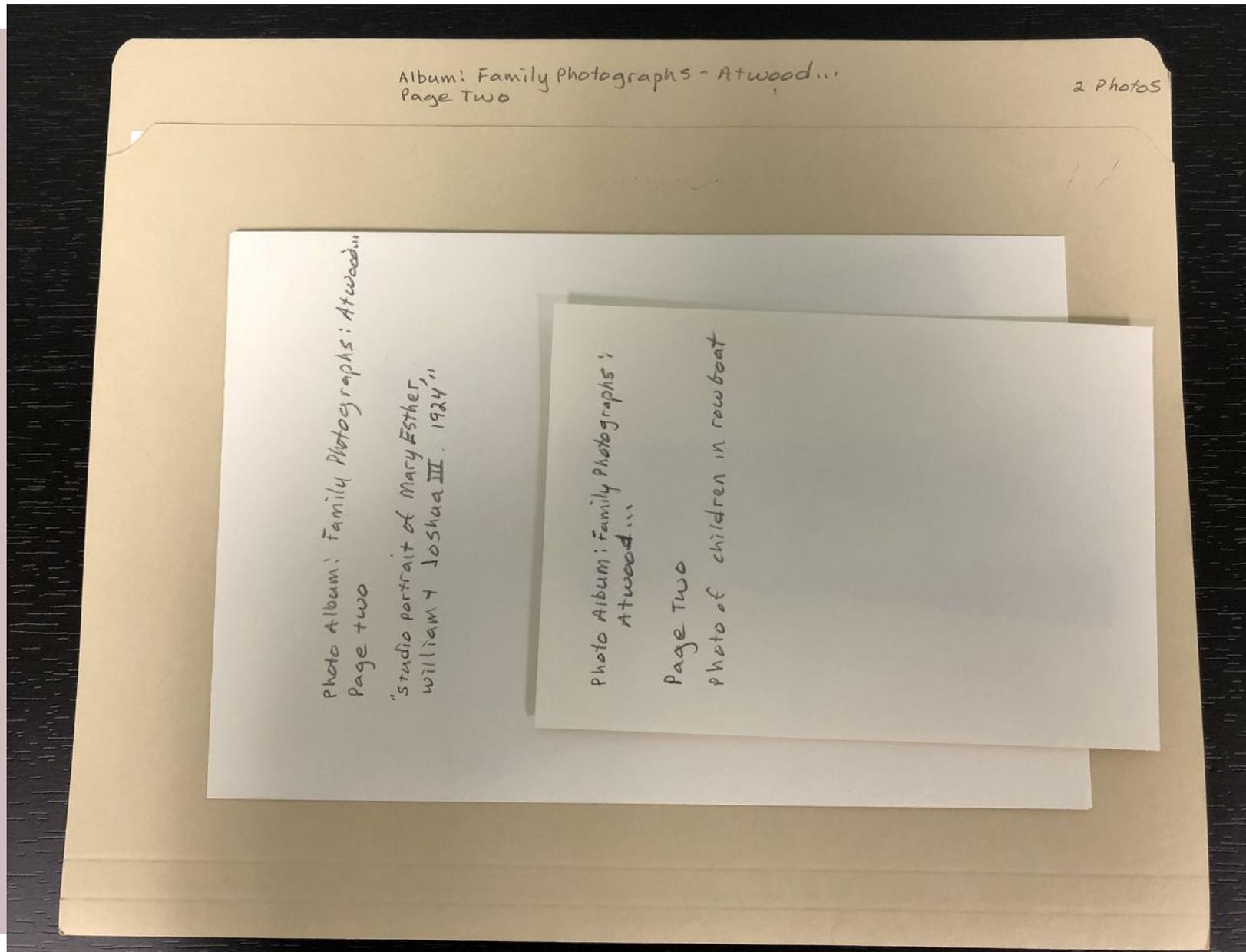
Tip

Document one page
at a time!





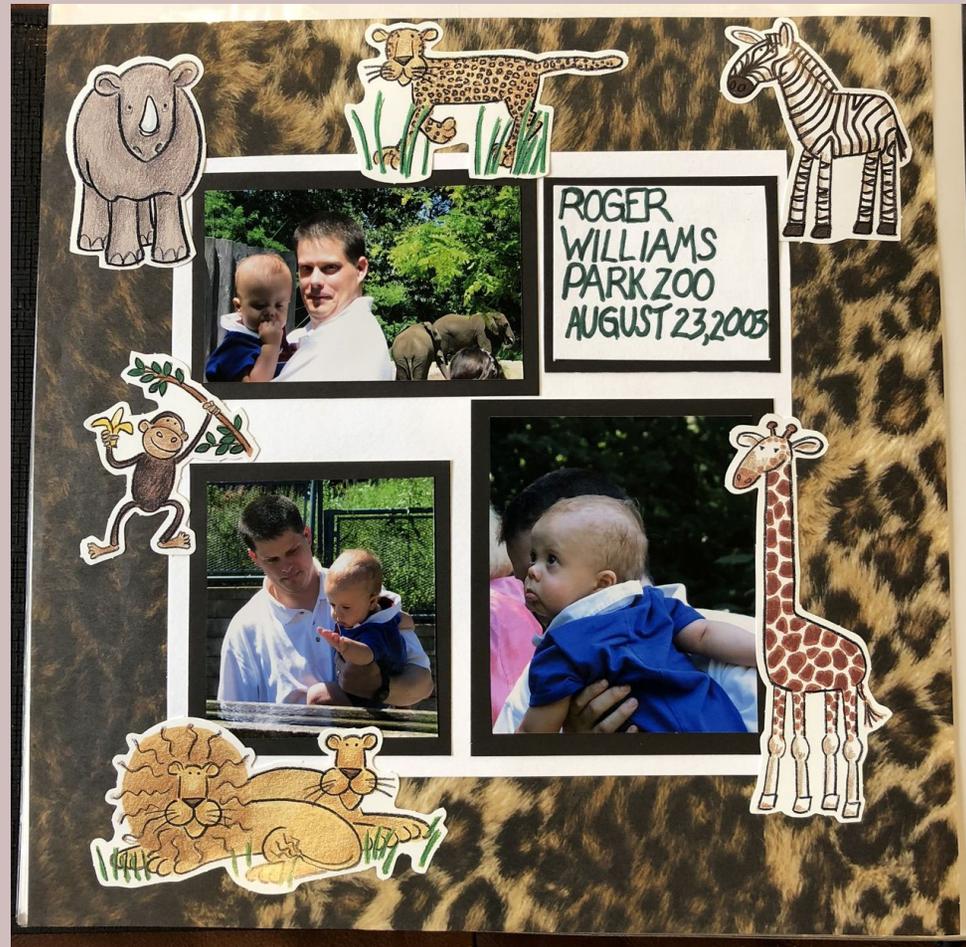




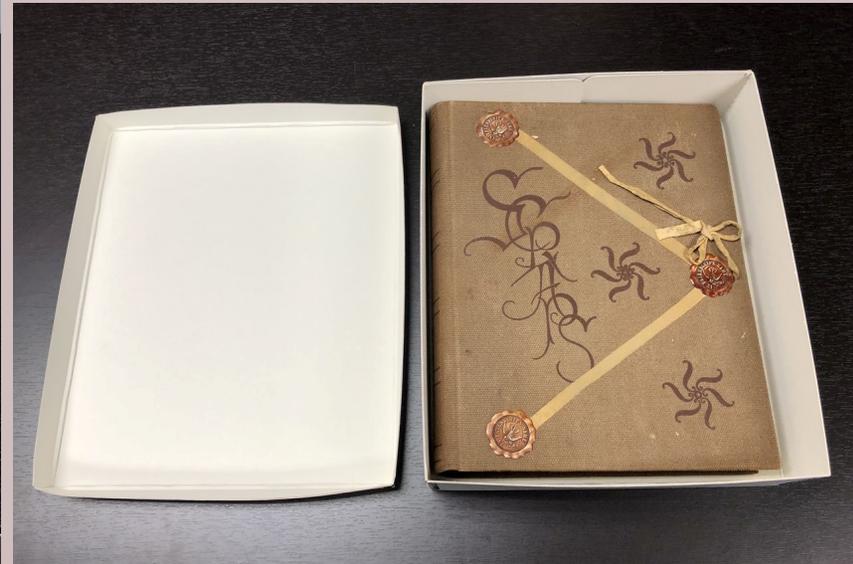
Scrapbooks



Scrapbooks



Storage Options





The header of the website features the logo for the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) on the left, which includes a grid of images showing various historical documents and artifacts. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT, WORKING WITH NEDCC, PHOTO LIBRARY, SUPPORTERS, CROWDFUNDING, and CONTACT. Below the navigation menu is a row of seven service categories: BOOK CONSERVATION, PAPER CONSERVATION, PHOTOGRAPH CONSERVATION, ASIAN ART CONSERVATION, IMAGING SERVICES, AUDIO PRESERVATION, ASSESSMENTS AND CONSULTATIONS, and PRESERVATION TRAINING. At the bottom of the header are three buttons for PRESERVATION LEAFLETS, DISASTER ASSISTANCE, and FREE RESOURCES, followed by a 'Join E-list' link, a search box, and social media icons for Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and a general social media icon.

PRESERVATION 101

- 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
 - Photographic Prints
 - Glass Supports
 - Film Supports
 - ▶ Storing Photograph Collections
 - Evaluating Your Collections
 - Additional Activities
- Session 6
Media Collections
- Session 7
Reformatting and Digitization
- Session 8
Emergency Preparedness
- Session 9
Building a Preservation Program
- The Preservation Assessment
- Additional Resources
- Credits



SESSION 5: CARE AND HANDLING OF PHOTOGRAPHS

STORING PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS

1 Prints | 2 Negatives | 3 Scrapbooks/Albums

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.

1 PRINTS

Enclosures

Photographic prints and negatives are best stored in individual enclosures. This reduces damage by giving the photograph or negative 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.

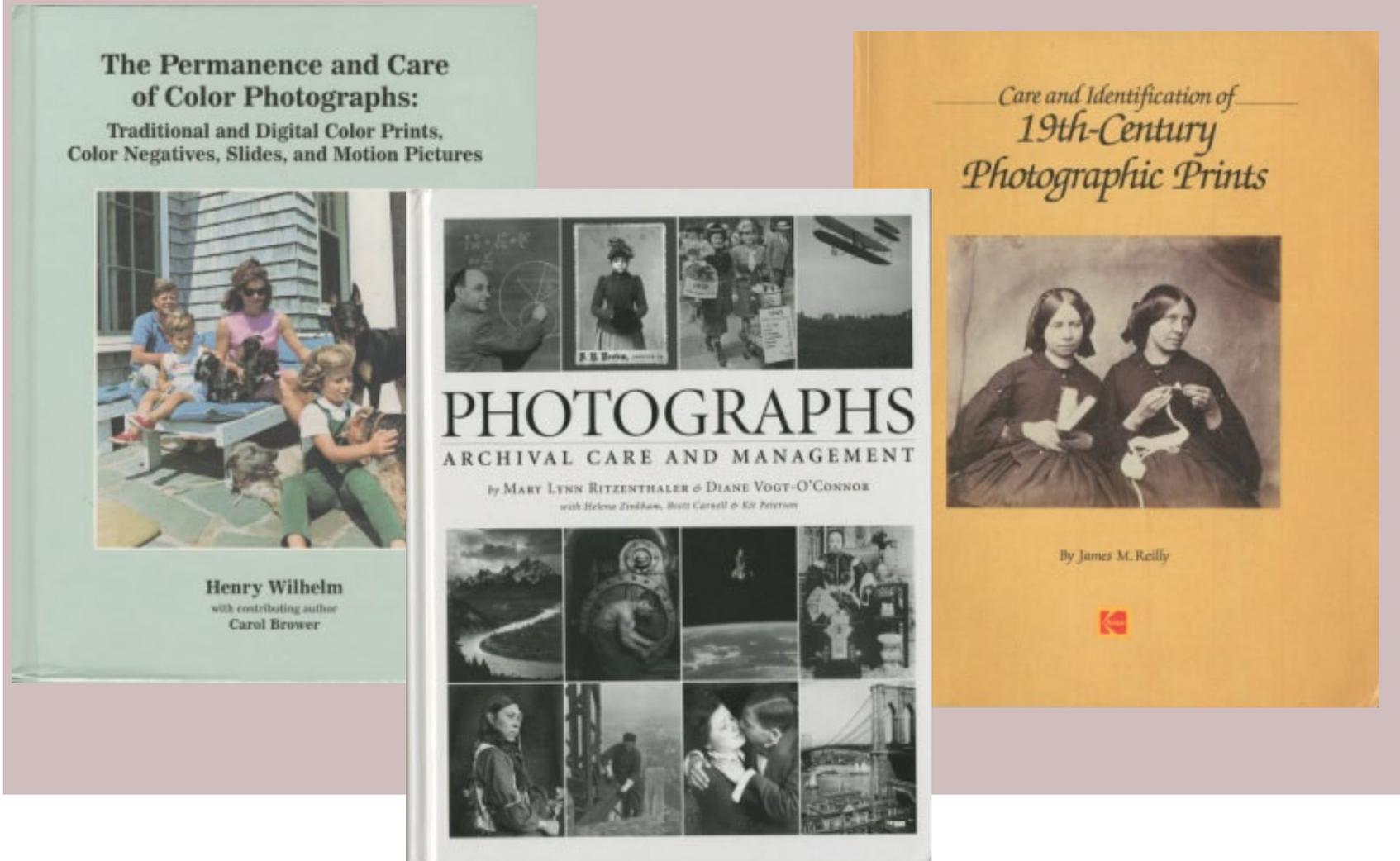
Plastic enclosures:

- 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!

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