

PRESERVING FAMILY HISTORY
BY
CLAIRE FREEDMAN, M.A. (NYU)
Certificate in Archival History and Historical Editing

Families have many methods for preserving their family history. Even within my own Family History work I have used several methods of preservation. Some have taken years and months of work; others have been done relatively quickly. Both will be valued by my posterity.

My Masters degree is in Archival Management and Historical Editing so I know I must use materials in my work that are acid free. Whenever I am doing a project, I think several generations down the line and ask the question: Will the archival content of this record still be maintained for my posterity?

Except for one Family History, I have not had any of my work put into professional print. For the most part, I am working with original photographs, but certainly, as my children and grandchildren want copies, it will be necessary to put them into copied book form. My GOALS for this work have been:

1. To first organize reams of family records into family lines and then, place them in chronological order. I use simple cardboard boxes filled with hanging files labeled by year to begin my work. Into these files I place every scrap of genealogy, photos, journals, etc. I have to first understand clearly what I am doing before I can transmit this information to others.
2. Copy, place in the proper historical record, and then throw away all those little random notes that have been gathered and collected by three generations before me.
3. Identify photographs with acid-free photographic pens. When there are pictures no longer identifiable, I separate them from my working files and place them in an "unidentified picture" file. I also place duplicate photos in a file labeled "duplicates."
4. Type faded, difficult to read or disjointed journal entries (always saving the originals that are hand written – maintaining the provenance of the original record), putting it all in an understandable order. Sometimes a whole journal needs to be recopied because it is so worn and fragile. The original is always saved in an acid free container.
5. Read all the thousands of letters that have been saved for years, keeping those that are germane to the genealogy and historical story. I discard superfluous or letters with duplicate information.
6. Label all family books so individual histories leave no question about where they belong.
7. I always keep the Family Group AND Pedigree Charts on Personal Ancestral File (PAF). Regardless of what program you use, be sure you are faithful on keeping a consistent accurate record of all temple work that has been done. When the written history of a particular family line is complete, I always place a separate section in it for a copy of the printed PAF record.
8. Regarding TIME, I always use Hugh Nibley's advice on this. He once wrote: "Life is too short to spend time with the ancients UNLESS they have something new and interesting to add to the story, something quite exciting." Another bit of advice on time: Do not beat yourself to death worrying about "getting to that family history." I have found, now that I am much older, that if your intent is pure to work on Family History, the Lord will provide windows of time in your life for this important work. Usually a house full of children will only provide small moments of time, but these small moments of gleaning add up to a valuable record to be worked upon when children are gone, relatives are dead and information has accumulated. However, this said, **DO NOT PASS UP THE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONDUCT ORAL HISTORIES OR COLLECT WRITTEN FAMILY THAT, OTHERWISE, WILL BE GONE WHEN PEOPLE DIE.**