

An Ounce of Prevention: Nine Tips for Keeping Your Family Treasures Safe

- ❑ **If you feel comfortable, your treasures will be comfortable.**
When you feel hot or cold, damp or dry, so do your treasures. You wouldn't feel comfortable living in the basement or attic and neither are they. You feel better when there is good circulation; so do they.
- ❑ **Avoid extremes of temperature and humidity.**
Strive to maintain as moderate and stable a level (72 degrees Fahrenheit and 50 percent relative humidity) as practically possible. When choosing where to display or store objects remember that the conditions of the interior walls, room, and closets are more stable than those on the exterior.
- ❑ **Create micro-climates and use protective covers.**
Matting and framing with proper materials creates protective micro-climates, as do chemically stable boxes (even boxes within boxes). Use dust covers on stored objects and polyester liners on wooden shelves to protect your treasures from dust and pollutants.
- ❑ **Limit light exposure.**
The damaging effects of light are cumulative. Take precautions with the amount and type of light to which your treasures are exposed.
- ❑ **Inspect your treasures regularly and tend to problems as they arise.**
Regularly checking your treasures will help you monitor and tend to problems as they arise. A water condensation problem might not be present in the summer, but left unattended during the winter, could cause serious damage.
- ❑ **Respond promptly.**
The speed with which you respond to a problem can diminish its severity. Immediately blotting a fresh spill on a cotton tablecloth, then flushing with water is better than allowing a stain to set, thereby necessitating the use of harsh soap or detergent later.
- ❑ **Use the gentlest means possible.**
Blot, don't rub. Brush, don't scrub.
- ❑ **Avoid do-it-yourself repairs and treatments.**
When in doubt, consult a professional conservator.
- ❑ **Be sure that any alterations are reversible. Respect the original historic materials and structure.**
Don't cut an artwork to fit a frame. And if you must clip a photograph for your scrapbook, do it to a copy and keep the original intact elsewhere.

For more information, see the Library of Congress *Preparing, Protecting, Preserving Family Treasures* Web site at www.loc.gov/preserv/familytreasures.

Excerpted from *Caring for Your Family Treasures*, published by Heritage Preservation, a nonprofit organization that works to save the objects that embody our history. To learn more about caring for your family treasures, please visit Heritage Preservation at www.heritagepreservation.org.