

## Tips for Preserving Family Letters and Documents

Preservation of family letters and other documents contain important information about a family's values, beliefs, and reflect a personal first-hand perspective of history. I believe that preservation of the past provides valuable knowledge about our personal family heritage that is useful for present and future generations.

1. Do not staple, glue, paper clip, or laminate letters.
2. Do not put post-it-notes on letters or secure them with rubber bands
3. Do not display letters in scrapbooks with adhesives (sometimes called magnetic pages. Anything with sticky surface will ultimately damage letters.) When storing photo's in an album, use "photo" or "archival" mounting corners (available from photography suppliers, archival material catalogs, or stamp dealers).
4. Store your letters flat
5. Preserve envelopes in which the letters were sent. Do not write on letters or envelopes in ink pen. Although discouraged by some, a #2 pencil can be used lightly for labeling a letter to a specific envelope.
6. Don't put newspaper clippings and photographs together in the same file.
7. Avoid displaying a special letter in a frame as sunlight and lamplight can fade a letter. Instead consider making a good color photocopy of this letter to display.
8. Consider transcribing your letters if handwritten. It makes them easier to read, and then provides an available copy to share with family members
9. Store your letters in a location with a steady and moderate temperature that is safe from water, heat, light, dust, and pests, (avoid storage in attics, sheds, garages)
10. Letters, clippings and other documents should be stored unfolded in buffered folders
11. There are mail order companies that specialize in preserving archival material including:

### **University Products**

PO Box 101

Holyoke, MA 01041-5514

1-800-628-1912

<http://www.universityproducts.com>

### **Gaylord Brothers**

PO Box 4901

Syracuse, NY 13221-4901

[www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)

### References

"Preserving your Wartime Letters." The Legacy Project, Wartime Letters. Accessed December 29, 2014.

<http://www.warletters.com/preserve/index.html>

"Conservation Resources." Compiled resources available at TN State Library and Archives. If there are questions, send email to [preservation.tsla@tn.go](mailto:preservation.tsla@tn.go)

## PRESERVING LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

Your paper documents and photos need protection from a variety of elements which contribute to their deterioration -- namely: light; heat; humidity; acids in papers. You can store and preserve your paper documents in a few different ways. I organized my letters and other documents in acid-free folders, and keep them in an acid-free box. I also have archival-safe, acid-free plastic sleeves that I have also used. I received this guidance from an archivist at the Tennessee State Archives who also gave me a list of places that have archival products available. The company I used was University Products at [www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com) and I will share that information with you but understand there are other companies. The key is knowing exactly what you want, including size, and then purchase acid-free products accordingly.

### I. Preserving letters.

a. Take letters out of envelopes and store flat

- i. **Archival Polyester L-Velope, 8.25 x 10.25 in. (has variety of sizes)** (clear plastic page with 2 sides open that makes it easier to insert page. I used -velopes for those items that would be "handled" or displayed at book events.



- ii. **Manuscript Folders (11 x 13) Manuscript Folders, 10 x 11.75 in., 1 in. Tab.** Folders with paper protection features. I organized my letters by month and put an average of 10 letters with envelopes in a folder. This box has 100 folders.



### II. Preserving letters in Document Boxes

- i. **Perma/Dry Document Boxes- 12.25 x 10.25 x 5 in. 733-2210C.** Boxes have a chemically inert coating that repels water.

