

# Scrapbooking Your Ancestors

## I. Getting Started

### A. Why

1. Creating a family legacy
2. Rewarding
3. Displaying your work beautifully

### B. Getting organized

1. Three ways to organize: Chronologically by years; by families; by individuals.  
Depending on the amount of materials you have to organize, use envelopes or even large manila envelopes. If you have pictures or documents that fit in with several different families/individuals, make copies to put into each pile.
2. Chronologically: sort by decades, then by years. The smaller the pile, the easier it is to work with it.
3. By family: start by organizing into stacks for your mother and father, then for your spouse's mother and father.
4. By individual: Place information for each individual in a pile/envelope.
5. Be sure to write the year/family name/ individual name on each time/family or individual.
6. Items to Include
  - a. Pictures of family members with names and dates.
  - b. Graphical representations of family members (pedigree chart).
  - c. Copies of official documents—birth, marriage, death, baptism, naturalization, land deeds, etc)
  - d. Information about spouse, siblings, children
  - e. Time lines of major known facts about the family—employment history, residences, births, deaths, marriages
  - f. Personal histories, family traditions, anecdotes, historical documents
  - g. Mementos to be shared with future generations—war medals, dog tags, hospital birth bracelets, picture lockets, locks of hair, etc.
  - h. Brief recap of significant historical, social and political events that affected the lives of the family.
  - i. Info on family hobbies or special talents
  - j. Newspaper articles about the family
  - k. Diplomas, certificates of achievement
  - l. Invitations/announcements—birth, graduation, wedding, and engagement.
  - m. Obituaries, prayer cards, sympathy cards

### C. Archival Information. A heritage album will take a lot of time and energy to create.

You will want to be confident that it will last as long as possible and look great for the next hundred years or so. You don't want it to start deteriorating in 20-30 years. Be sure to use archival-safe materials.

1. Acid-free. Materials that have a pH of 7.0 or higher. This indicates the absence of acid. Acid breaks down paper and photographs.
2. Acid migration. Acid will transfer to materials which are less acidic.

3. Archival quality. Materials or products that are permanent, durable or chemically stable, and that can therefore safely be used for preservation.
4. Buffer paper. A paper that is pH neutral to begin with and has been made more alkaline to neutralize additional acids that may migrate to the paper.
5. Lignin. A chemical compound largely responsible for the strength and rigidity of plants. Its presence in paper is believed to contribute to chemical deterioration. Paper with less than one percent lignin is considered lignin-free. Lignin is believed to be more harmful to photographs than acid.
6. Mylar (polyester, polypropylene). Used as a protective clear covering for photos and album pages. Mylar is currently regarded as the highest quality material used for this purpose.
7. Photo safe. A term loosely used by many companies to indicate that they believe their products are safe to use with photographs. There is no regulation of the term by a legally enforceable standard. This term is used in many instances when a product is not, in fact, safe to be used near photos. Inaccurate use of this term may be due to ignorance, a wish to deceive or just a lack of photo preservation knowledge.
8. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC). A material found in some plastic products and adhesives that can break down to form acids.

#### D. Paper Deterioration

1. Color photos, documents, newsprint and books are prone to deterioration due to acid in poor-quality paper.
2. Poorest quality of paper is newsprint. It will brown and turn brittle. It will also bleed onto neighboring pieces of paper.
3. Best solution is to photocopy information on acid-free paper. The original can be stored in acid-free paper protectors.
4. There are products that remove most of the acid content of paper and newsprint. Spray both sides of the document or newspaper item with the product (Archival Mist, Good News). They help protect the paper against yellowing, deterioration and crumbling.

#### E. Paper Storage and Preservation

1. Proper storage of documents is important to preserve and increase the life span of the paper. Light, humidity, heat and improper handling by people cause the most damage to a paper's life span.
2. Place between 2 sheets of acid-free buffered paper and then place in a plastic sheet protector. Store most important papers in a bank safety-deposit box or in an air-conditioned closet of your house. Buffer paper should be changed periodically if acid migration occurs.
3. Store pages open and flat. Don't use tape or glue to repair torn paper. There are acid-free adhesive tapes that you can use on the backs of photographs to repair them. Don't laminate—this does not prolong the life of the paper and cannot be undone. Don't use staples, paper clips or other metal objects that could rust. Don't store in attic or basement.
4. If you have old photos that are not on acid-free paper, photocopy them.
5. Labeling photographs. Use photographic marker on back—available at photography, scrapbooking and craft stores. Don't rely on your memory!!

F. Reorganize every time things start getting messy. Re-sort and re-file often so you will continue to enjoy your activity.

## II. The Album

- A. Three-Ring Binders--Least expensive, versatile, easy to use; D-ring allows pages to lie flat. Pages can be stored in plastic page protectors; pages movable; when open, space between pages.
- B. Strap-Bound Expandable Albums--Plastic strap binding that allows your album to be expanded; facing pages lie flat and flush side by side; pages movable; page protectors are available.
- C. Post-Bound Albums—hole-punched sides with metal posts binding them; can expand by adding posts; when open lie flush side by side, but not flat; pages movable.
- D. Spiral-Bound Albums—good for single theme scrapbooks; photos go on both sides of the paper, so cannot reorganize; cannot add or move pages; page protectors not available. Not a good choice for heritage albums.
- E. Magnetic Photo Albums—don't use—most of the damage to your photos and documents occurs in the first 5 years. If you currently have such an album, take your pictures out so they won't deteriorate more. Problems getting photos of magnetic album—use Un-Du: it neutralizes the adhesive temporarily and the evaporates.
- F. Page Size
  - 1. 8 ½ X 11: will feed through most printers if you want to use computer fonts and clip art; photocopies are less expensive. Space is more limiting so there's less room.
  - 2. 12 X 12: gives more room for layout. Can't feed through most copier or printers; photocopies are more expensive.
- G. Sheet Protectors—single and double; top loading and side loading
- H. Basic Supplies
  - 1. Photo-safe adhesive
  - 2. Permanent pens
  - 3. Straight and decorative scissors
  - 4. Punches
  - 5. Binder
  - 6. Sheet protectors
  - 7. Acid-free paper
  - 8. Paper trimmer
  - 9. pH testing pen
  - 10. Photographic marker
  - 11. Ruler

## III. Album Assembly

- A. Selecting Papers—wide selection of plain and patterned; different weights—heavier is the best for background page
- B. Color—for heritage albums, soft, classic colors are best rather than bold and bright. Use the color that conveys the best mood for that page, but remember to keep the style and theme of your album consistent. You may want to keep your colors to 4 or 6.

- C. Original vs. Duplicates—I don't recommend using one of a kind photos—photocopy instead—also allows you to change the size if you need to.
  - D. Cropping—Be sure to leave anything in the background that would give information about date, etc. Don't crop Polaroids—they contain an acid gel inside them.
  - E. Matting Photographs—
  - F. Layouts—
  - G. Templates—
  - H. Panoramic pages—
  - I. Borders—
  - J. Embellishments—
    - 1. Die Cuts
    - 2. Punch Art
    - 3. Rubber stamps
    - 4. Stickers
    - 5. Ribbon
    - 6. Novelty paper—mulberry, etc
- IV. Journaling—one of the most important elements to your heritage album. Journaling brings pictures and documents to life. Record what others tell you about family members. Interview family members
- A. By hand or computer, stencils, stamps, stamps or die-cut alphabets.
  - B. If you don't know the story, leave space to add later.
  - C. Use pages without pictures.
  - D. Be sure to journal the hard time—gives others insights to the personalities of the people in the pictures.