



Phyllis

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Hours:

Monday-Thursday
9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Friday & Saturday
9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Closed Sundays

Restoring Old Photographs

Using your home computer

When you talk about family history, you will inevitably bring out an old torn or discolored photograph of a long lost relative. With the digital advancements, people are able not only to preserve those priceless photos, but you can also repair them.

Definitions you need to know:

Restoration is the process of recreating the appearance of a photograph.

Acid-free refers to items free of any and all acidic qualities.

Archival products are not to be confused with acid-free. Archival products are products which claim they are not harmful and will prevent damage. This claim is not monitored and any product can claim to be archival.

Step 1: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of work.

The best way to repair a photograph is to make sure it is not damaged in the first place. Here are some helpful hints on preventing damage.

- * Keep photographs out of direct sunlight.
- * Keep photographs stored in dry, low humidity areas.
- * Choose areas for storage where the humidity and temperature remains consistent all year long.
- * Lay photographs in a way that prevents two pictures from transferring to each other. The best suggestion is to place non-acidic paper between the photographs or arrange them back to front.
- * Only handle the edges of the photograph. You can add oil or dirt without even knowing it.
- * Only use acid free glues, pens, paper, etc with your photographs.
- * Keep photographs out of areas that could flood.
- * Look for PVC or polyvinyl chloride free plastic to store photographs.
- * When handling very old photographs, you might want to wear clean cotton gloves.

Step 2: Assess the Damage

There are many common types of damage to photographs. Each type has a different solution and cause. Below is a list of damages and common causes.

1. Improper washing = Unfortunately, this type of damage only appears after years and is caused by improper film development. This type of damage should not occur with current film development.
2. Mold = Mold is commonly known by everyone and is caused by exposure to high humidity and moisture.
3. Abrasions = Abrasions is a scratching on the surface of the photograph. It is often caused by mishandling the photograph.
4. Curling = Curling occurs when the photographs begins to “curl up” and no longer will lie flat. This damage is usually caused by exposure to high humidity and/or moisture.
5. Transference = This type of damage was listed in the “Ounce of prevention” section and occurs when an image from one photograph is transferred on to the image of another photograph.
6. Fading = Fading is the most common damage. It occurs when the image begins to lighten. It can be caused by improper development or the type of development, but it can also be caused by exposure to natural light.
7. Discoloration = Discoloration is a change in the color of a photograph. It is often seen in black and white photographs when the photo takes on a brownish cast.
8. Foxing = Foxing is the term which refers to the reddish brown spots appear on a photograph and is usually caused by exposure to high humidity locations.
9. Mildew = Mildew is usually a whitish growth caused by fungus. Storing photographs in areas prone to moisture, flooding and high humid-

ity can all lead to this type of damage.

10. Fingerprint on images = Fingerprints can appear on a image years after it was originally touched. The oils from our fingers are the most common cause of this damage.
11. Silver mirroring = Silver Mirroring occurs when the photograph has a bluish cast. Mostly this is cause by the development process or type of photographic material.
12. Cracked Emulsion= Cracked Emulsion is evident when pieces of the image flake off. It is caused by exposing the photographs to extreme heat or cold.

Step 3 Restoring the Photographs at Home

To begin restoration, you need to have the following items: a computer, photo editing software, scanner, and possibly a digital camera.

Photo editing software comes from a variety of companies and with a variety of prices. Some of the most common are:

1. Photoshop Elements \$89.99
2. Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 \$39.95
3. PhotoImpact \$69.99
4. ACDSee Photo Editor \$49.99
5. PhotoPlus \$79.99
6. PhotoSuite \$29.99
7. FotoFinish Suite \$129.00
8. Photo Explosion \$39.99
9. PhotoImpression \$49.99

Some sites have links to downloadable and free photo editing software.

1. GIMP for Windows <http://www.gimp.org/windows/>
2. Serif PhotoPlus <http://www.freeserifsoftware.com/>
3. Picasa <http://picasa.google.com/>
4. Paint.NET <http://www.getpaint.net/index.html>
5. Pixia <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/mighty/knight/>
6. VCW VicMan's Photo Editor <http://www.vicman.net/vcwphoto/index.htm>
7. PhotoFiltre http://photofiltre.free.fr/frames_en.htm
8. Ultimate Paint <http://www.ultimatepaint.com/>
9. ImageForge http://www.cursorarts.com/ca_imffw.html

When searching for photo editing software, keep the following features in mind:

- * An unlimited number of undos
- * Ability to see two views of the image at one time
- * Ability to blowup a specific detail many times

Before you begin., **save two copies of the photograph.** One you will use to edit and the other is a backup.

Be patient. It will take time to learn how to use the photo editing software. Each mistake is a learning experience and keep that in mind.

Zoom in on work area. You can make changes easier if you can

see the problem clearly. Plus, the changes are less noticeable when you complete the repair.

Step 4: Know Your Tools

Each program has some common tools. Here is a list of the tool and what it can repair:

- * Airbrushing—This tool allows you to add or redo a color on a photograph. It is helpful when repairing discoloration and transference.
- * Auto Repair—Each program had its own version of this tool. It will enhance contrast, brightness, and color automatically. It is computer controlled. It helps to repair fading, silver mirroring, and discoloration.
- * Blur—Blurring allows you to soften harsh images or lines. This tool can be useful after some repairs as well. It will help repair transference and spots.
- * Clone—Cloning can also be called copying. You copy a texture or color from one part of the photo and place it in another part. This tool can repair all types of damages.

Step 5: Your plan of attack

Once you have chosen your photo editing program and gotten used to the tools.

1. Chose a simple repair job.
2. Make two copies of the photograph. One for repair and an original.
3. Look at the photograph and note all problems which need to be fixed.
4. Decide whether you want to keep the photograph in color or sepia tone (the brownish cast) or make it black and white.
5. If you choose to change the photograph to black and white, choose a program that can change color to grayscale. Some camera loading software can do this and so can many of the photo editing programs. You can also use Microsoft Publisher to format the picture and make it black or gray.
6. Start repairing the most obvious area first. Choose the appropriate tool. Take your time. There is no rush or deadline.
7. If you make any mistakes, use the undo button.
8. Slowly work your way around the photograph making the appropriate changes.
9. Know when to quit. There will come a time when you are repairing an image and can do no more. Sometimes in attempts to make the image perfect, the image might become distorted. If that happens, use your undo button. Then quit. You can always try again later.

Helpful Books

Digital Photography Before and After Makeovers by Julie Adair King

Main Branch 775 Ki

Family Historian #42: Restoring Old Photographs

Main Branch CD 929.1 Fa #42 (stored with the DVDs)

More Than Memories: The Complete Guide to Preserving Your Family History edited by Julie Stephani
Southern Branch 745.593 Mo
Preserving Your Family Photographs by Maureen A. Taylor
Main Branch 771.46 Ta

Helpful Websites

About.com Top 8 Free Photo Editors for Windows: This site gives links to the free software, tells what operating systems it works best with, and what each software contains.

<http://graphicssoft.about.com/od/pixelbasedwin/tp/freephotoedw.htm?p=1>

CoOL: This site has free information on preservation of different types of materials. <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/>

Genealogy.com: This website has a wealth of information for genealogists of all levels, but it does have a section on repairing old photographs. http://www.genealogy.com/10_restr.html

Photo Editing Software Review: This site does just what it says. It reviews different types of photo editing software.

<http://photo-editing-software-review.toptenreviews.com/>

Copyright Issues

When working with photographs, you need to be aware of copyright laws. According to Taylor's Preserving Your Family Photographs, photographs before 1923 are no longer subject to copyright. Photos taken from 1923 to 1963 are not subject to copyright unless the copyright was renewed. Photographs taken from 1964 to 1977 are copyrighted for twenty-eight years and can be renewed for ninety-five years. Photographs taken after 1978 are copyrighted from the end of the author's life plus seventy years.

For more information on copyright laws, go to <http://www.copyright.gov>.