

If These Buckets Could Talk

Tales from the Museum Collections

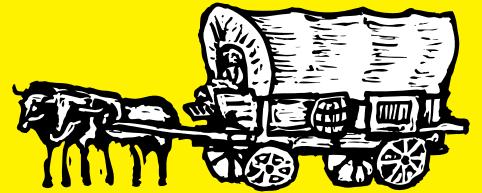


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Tips for your own treasures

In *If These Buckets Could Talk*, we are looking at artifact treasures from the museum collections—primary sources that help us to learn more about life in the past through the stories they can tell us. Many of these artifacts were donated to the museum by families that wanted to share their stories with museum researchers and visitors. Not only can these artifacts tell very personal tales, they can also tell us about historic time periods and events.

Maybe you have treasures at home that you want to care for in a way that will preserve them for future generations. Here are a few tips on how to care for and enjoy your prized possessions:

Want to learn more about what you have?

Your closest public library is a great place to start. Librarians in the reference section can assist you in finding books on your particular artifact or area of historic interest. If your library does not have books on your type of artifact, most will assist you with a bibliography and even inter-library loan, so that you can use books from other libraries and return them to your local library.

Consider joining a club or organization dedicated to the study of your type of artifact. There are listings for affinity groups and clubs on-line and sometimes in the backs of books written about certain types of artifacts. You might even want to try to contact the author of a particular book on a subject you are interested in to see if they are aware of associated clubs or study groups. If you can't find one in your area or through correspondence, start one of your own.

Quick tips about the best way to store and share your treasure

- Keep your things stored in acid free tissue paper, boxes, and storage containers
- Keep them stored in a light-free environment
- Keep your air temperature and humidity – amount of moisture in the air – at an even level. It is better to store things at the same temperature than have a fluctuating temperature. Keep things in a closet where water and excessive heat or cold conditions are not a problem

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San Bernardino County Museum

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Buckets tips (continued)

- Keep your storage area a “pest free zone” – use insect and rodent traps (sticky traps work well) so that these pesky pests don’t ruin your treasures
- When working with your things, don’t do any procedure to anything that is not fully reversible. Avoid using ink pens anywhere near your belongings
- The less you handle things, the longer they will last. Wear clean cotton gloves instead of touching with your hands, since even clean hands pass on invisible material that can degrade what you treasure
- Make one good set of photocopies of items that can be copied, put away your originals and enjoy studying and sharing the copies with family and friends
- Make your viewing and storage areas “no smoking, eating, and drinking zones”. A spill or crumb can ruin your things, and will attract those pesky pests
- Write down and record your family stories to go along with your treasures. Oral histories are a primary source themselves, a gift to present and future generations. Use a tape or video recorder, make sure it works well. Construct a list of questions you want to ask a relative while interviewing them, or write down a list of things you want to share with others in your family if you are recording your memories for posterity. Don’t forget the basics, like dates and names. Include detailed information, and personal insights. These are the real treasure, a legacy for the future

Do you need to find a conservator?

If your treasures are damaged or are in need of immediate help, we suggest you contact the non-profit professional organization American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. They can be reached at: www.aic-faic.org – click on the bar at the top that says “Public Info” or reach them by calling: 202.452.9545. This organization will give you information about conservators in your area, based upon your zip code and the type of artifact you need help with.

Do you need to purchase boxes and tissue to store your artifact?

There are many sources for purchasing storage containers for your artifacts on the internet and at scrapbook stores. Make sure that you buy boxes that are made of acid-free cardboard, specifically designed for “archival” use. All tissue paper and packing materials must be acid-free as well. If you are purchasing clear sleeves to put documents or photos in, make sure they are made of polyester. We expressly do not suggest that you use any other products offered by archival supply companies like marking pens or treatment products at home. Although these companies may carry products used by professional conservators and museum staff, they have had many years of training. Don’t try this at home! If something is not totally and completely reversible, like a storage box or tissue paper, do not use it on your artifact.

Do you want to have your artifact appraised?

We suggest you contact your insurance agent or attorney for information about having something appraised by a true professional, qualified to give you accurate information.

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