

Preservation and Care of Philatelic Materials

Subsidiary Page 6 Proper Handling of Stamps and Covers

We frequently come by cards and covers which have tear damage repaired with plastic tape. Serious trouble is certainly at hand with such items. You may think, and probably correctly so, that further deterioration of the item can be avoided by removal of the plastic tape. The utility of Scotch tape and other plastic tapes is legend; however, such tapes should absolutely never under any circumstances be used to repair philatelic materials, even temporarily. The best advice in dealing with the repair of items mended with plastic tape is to seek the aid and services of a professional conservator.

Cardboard is another item to be kept well away from our philatelic materials. It is generally highly acidic, and the chemicals in cardboard are rapidly transferred and hasten destruction. If you require a rigid support of a philatelic item, use an all-rag type of board.

Conservators use chemical baths to eliminate mildew growth and stains. Frequently, when papers have been cleaned and bleached, they are dipped in a gelatin bath in order to restore the paper. The glutinous sizing of the paper adds strength to it, and sometimes a corrective dye will be added to the gelatin bath in order to give the paper a tint close to its original color.

Foxing, which is a stain caused by fungal growth, can often be removed by using a potassium permanganate solution of five drops per pint of water. Carbon tetrachloride or benzene are effective in removing grease and oily stains. These chemicals are very hazardous and must be used according to instructions on the containers. The best advice is to let the professional clean your philatelic items.

It does sound extreme, but immersion of a stamp in boiling water will remove some oily stains. It is vital, however, that the printing inks of the stamp are not water soluble.

Restoration of older stamps which have become oxidized can be effected with hydrogen peroxide solution, five drops per pint of water.

Advanced restorative techniques which should only be used by the experienced professional restorer include inlaying and cellulose acetate strengthening.

We cannot stress enough that the chemical restoration methods mentioned in this section are best applied by professional restorers who are experienced with the chemicals and their effects. The various methods are mentioned here only to provide you with some possibilities best explored with the professionals.

Conservators tell us that the leather covers, corners, and backs of our albums will benefit from treatment with potassium lactate solution every two years to preserve the leather. On the other hand, cloth bound albums require little attention beyond the occasional dusting. The best practice is to mount your philatelic materials on acid-free album pages.