

Framing Focus

Save Your Treasures

At the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History, conservators are working to preserve the actual American flag that inspired Francis Scott Key's "Star Spangled Banner." Since the flag was made in 1813, it has endured the War of 1812 and over 200 years of wear and tear. In fact, the family that owned the flag before donating it to the Smithsonian in 1912 used to give clippings of the flag as gifts.

Throughout the preservation process, which is a "Save America's Treasures" project, the flag will be kept on display. Visitors are able to view the flag for a few hours each day, before and after which the flag's display case is covered to protect it from unnecessary (and possibly harmful) exposure to light.

What about your treasures? Are there items, artwork, and photos that you would like to see stand the test of time to be enjoyed for years to come? Preservation framing can achieve this. There are many materials available that we can use to protect items from the effects of environmental concerns—even those, like Old Glory, which may already be damaged (see photos).

For example, there are matboards made from 100% cotton fiber (rag board) or purified wood pulp that are free of acid and lignin found in most paper products. This acid and lignin can cause chemical reactions that degrade the materials over time. By using preservation-quality matboard, we can ensure that this process is slowed dramatically. For example, the Gutenberg Bible, which has survived since the 15th century, is made of rag paper.

The glazing we use is also important in preservation. Glazing is either the glass or acrylic sheet used on the face of a frame package. These are available with properties that filter out ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunlight and some artificial light as well. Most of these specially treated materials filter out up to 99% of the light rays that can fade framed items.

The Art & Framing Council (AFC) offers some tips about protecting your art from light damage: Choose subdued lighting effects that won't reflect into the glazing; never hang artwork in direct sunlight; and never use fluorescent lights to illuminate artwork since their UV concentrations are very high. (Incandescent bulbs are a better choice.)

Also, take a look at the things you have that are already framed. If you see signs of degrading materials, such as faded colors or condensation and water damage under the glazing, bring them into our shop and we'll evaluate it with you to see if it should be reframed with preservation needs in mind. We'll help you save your treasures! ■



The water damage on the matting of this frame package threatens the artwork. It was not framed preservationally, and should be reframed to ensure its longevity.



Regular cardboard was used to back this artwork, and acid burn has resulted as you can see by the imprint of the letters.

Holidays With A Flair

If you've started eyeing the stores for presents for your loved ones and you can't seem to find "just the right gift," there's a great way to give them something they'll really love. Why not have something framed? The choices run the gamut—from collectibles and mementos that are special to them, to a photo or piece of artwork that you know they love.

If you bring it to us, we'll work with you to create a gift

that will knock their socks off. And you can be sure no one else will get it for them!

And while you're shopping for others, take a look at your own walls. Perhaps it's time to freshen up your home with new artwork. Or if you have some favorite pieces in your holiday decorations, we can frame them for you so they are keepsakes that you display every year to make your home even more special during holiday gatherings. ■

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