

Kentfield Greenbrae Historical Society

Historian

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www.kghs.org

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President's Message

Kodachrome film, new babies now grown to cradle their own grandchildren, age- yellowed albums documenting a family road trip through Utah's National Park splendors and a carefully saved letter home from Boy Scout camp, penned in 1937: these were just a very few of the many tangible reminders of the past that I discovered as I sorted through my Mom and Dad's house as I readied it for sale.

I have taken such joy in my discoveries (my grandmother had saved a lock of my dad's hair after his first haircut, circa 1928!) but wonder what to do next. I don't want to just save everything in another box for the next generation of family archeologists to uncover! I'm hoping I'll get a few of my questions answered by art conservator Gawain Weaver at the KGHS Members Meeting on March 23.

In the meantime, I'll enjoy the memories . . . and look forward to creating new ones, right here in the heart of Marin!

Susan Morrow

President, Kentfield-Greenbrae Historical Society 2016-17

Members Meeting in March!

Please join us!

Thursday, March 23 from 6-8 pm

**Community Room at Jason's Restaurant
300 Drake's Landing, Greenbrae**

- 6-6:30 pm coffee, cookies and conversation
- 6:30-6:40 pm KGHS update and business
- 6:40-8 pm Presentation and Q&A



Gawain Weaver
Art Conservator
San Anselmo

About Gawain Weaver

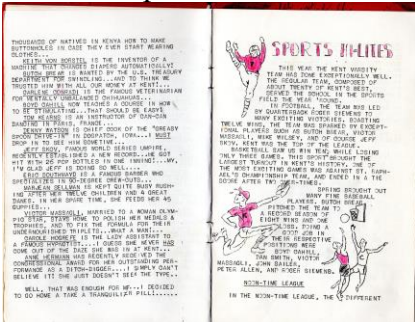
Gawain Weaver received B.A. degrees in art history and chemistry (2001) from Sonoma State University, and an M.A. in art history and diploma in conservation (2005) from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Over the course of his academic career, he interned at the City Parks Foundation and the Getty Museum, as well as in the photograph conservation departments of the Amon Carter Museum, Library and Archives Canada, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Northeast Document Conservation Center. He also spent a summer studying with José Orraca, a photograph conservator in private practice.

In 2007, he completed a two-year fellowship in the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation at the George Eastman House and Image Permanence Institute in Rochester, NY, followed by a year as a researcher at the Image Permanence Institute. In 2008, he returned home to Northern California where he lives today, working as a photograph conservator, teacher, and consultant. In addition to regular workshops, Gawain teaches photograph preservation in the San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science.

Gawain is a Professional Associate of the American Institute for Conservation and abides by the AIC Code of Ethics.

www.gawainweaver.com

Many of us have collections of personally significant materials. These may include diaries and letters handed down through generations or photographs of significant life events or even a set of old tickets stubs, but our diverse collections create a record of who we are and where we come from. These paper-based collections deteriorate over time, but making small changes in storage and handling can have a huge impact on the lifespan of the materials.



Kent Class of 1957: Yearbook and class photo with George Stratton (Courtesy M. Rogers)

Controlling the environment

The best protection for your books, papers, photographs, and prints is a cool, dry, stable environment with good air circulation and limited light exposure.

Quick Reference: Environmental Control

- Create a stable environment. A good target is 70 degrees Fahrenheit and RH below 55%, but work within your means.
- Avoid storing items in the attic or basement.
- Avoid storing material along outer walls, which tend to experience temperature fluctuations.
- Avoid storing items near heat sources.
- Avoid storing items near or below water sources.
- Store material at least four inches off of the floor to reduce risk of damage from floods and leaks.
- Use blinds and curtains, and keep lights off, to reduce fading and damage from light exposure.
- Dust and vacuum regularly to discourage pests.

It is impossible to avoid all sources of risk, but awareness of possible hazards will allow you to prepare for and respond to any problems that arise.

Storage Enclosures

While stabilizing the environment will offer the broadest benefit to your collections, housing items in storage enclosures provides another layer of protection. Enclosures provide structural support, protect contents from tears, breaks, slumping, or other distortion, and reduce damage from airborne pollutants. Preservation-quality paper or chemically stable plastic enclosures can be used, and are suitable for a variety of materials.

(cont'd p. 3)

We all probably have boxes, albums and drawers filled with family photos, letters and documents. Did you keep your love letters? What about that high school scrap book? Or those clippings when your kids played high school sports? I'm sure some of you have those special newspapers: Kennedy's Assassination, First Man on the Moon or 9/11. What do you want to do with them?

Archive as a *noun*: a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people

as a *verb*: to place or store (something) in an archive

Conserve *verb*: to protect (something, especially an environmentally or culturally important place or thing) from harm or destruction

Preserve *verb*: to maintain (something) in its original or existing state

Restore *verb*: to return something to a former owner, place, or condition

This issue of the Historian will give you some basics for organizing and archiving your family letters and photos, as well as some recommended resources. Our guest speaker Gawain Weaver will be able to answer some of your more specific questions.

Paper Enclosures

Look for terms that indicate the stability of the boxes, mats, folders, and other paper enclosures. In general, you will want *acid-free, lignin-free, buffered* materials... While buffered paper enclosures are generally preferred, blueprints, some inks and paints, and some photographs are sensitive to alkaline buffering. Unbuffered enclosures are difficult to find, but unbuffered tissue paper is readily available. Alkaline sensitive materials can be protected by placing the unbuffered tissue paper between the item and the buffered folder or box.

Be aware that paper enclosures labeled *acid-free* with no further qualifiers are only acid-free at the point of manufacture. These enclosures may become acidic relatively quickly, leading to deterioration of the items within.

Plastic Enclosures

Plastics work well in instances where it is important to be able to see an item while avoiding unnecessary handling, but not all plastics are safe for collections... There are safe options, though. Preservation-grade polyester (often sold under the trade name Melinex) is the most stable, but polyethylene or polypropylene can also be used safely if they do not contain plasticizers.

When considering paper or plastic enclosures for photographs, choose materials that pass the Photographic Activity Test (PAT)...

Quick Reference: Choosing Enclosures

- Choose boxes without gaps or handle holes and with snug lids to help exclude dust and pollutants.
- Use acid-free, lignin-free and buffered paper, board and tissue, unless the object is alkaline sensitive.
- Use polyester, polyethylene or polypropylene if plastic enclosures are preferred.
- Paper and plastic enclosures for photographs should pass the PAT.
- The size and shape of envelopes, boxes, and folders should match the objects they hold.
- Purchase or make custom-fitted book boxes to ensure proper support and fit.

Specific Concerns

Envelopes

Store documents in folders rather than envelopes to reduce damage from handling as items are removed and replaced.

Folded or Rolled Materials

Repeated folding and unfolding causes breaks in the paper along the fold lines. Papers should be flattened for storage, if possible. Care should be taken when unfolding or unrolling items and efforts should be discontinued if the paper shows signs of brittleness or breaking.

Resist the urge to counter-fold along creases, as this will further weaken the already fragile paper fibers.

Framed Items

Any valuable photo or artwork on display should be protected by a preservation-quality mat and frame. Glazing protects the item from pollutants and dirt, and choosing UV filtering glass or acrylic reduces light damage.

News Clippings

Photocopy brittle or damaged news clippings onto acid-free, lignin-free, buffered paper. Store copies separately from originals, or, if stored together, place a sheet of interleaving paper between the original and the copy to reduce acid migration.

Odors in Books

MicroChamber® products, which contain Zeolite molecular traps, have proven very effective in removing odors. Place a sheet of the paper between the front board and the endpaper, then approximately every 20 pages throughout the volume, and again between the back board and endpaper. Close the book and set it aside for a month. The smell should be reduced, but the process may need to be repeated for complete elimination.



*Corvi Gardens Flood 1920's
(College Avenue and current COM
parking lot facing Kent Woodlands)*

Photographs and Prints

When storing photos in an album, use "photo" or mounting corners. Choose a photo album with buffered or neutral, good-quality paper and/or preservation-quality polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene pages. Ensure materials have passed the PAT.

Removing Fasteners Safely

Slide a piece of stiff plastic (e.g., polyester, polypropylene) under the paperclip or staple on both sides of the document to help protect the paper from damage as you work. Then slide the paper clip off, or bend the edges of the staple up and pull it out with a pair of tweezers or a thin knife.

Conclusion

Family collections tie us to our past. With a bit of thought and a small amount of effort, these collections can be preserved and protected. By assessing storage options, becoming aware of risks to materials, and making informed decisions, you can drastically improve the lifespan of your materials at little or no cost.

<https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preserving-private-and-family-collections/caring-for-private-and-family-collections>

Archiving and Conserving Resources:

North East Document Center: <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preserving-private-and-family-collections/caring-for-private-and-family-collectionsv>

Gawain Weaver: Gawainweaver.com

National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/storing.html>

Archival Methods: <http://www.archivalmethods.com/blog/preserving-old-letters/>

Practical Archivist: <http://practicalarchivist.com/howto-preserve-love-letters/#nomobile>

KGHS... What's ahead?

- **Ross Historical Society** presents **George Demont Otis** on Friday, April 7 at noon. Mary Gilardi and Richard Torney from the KGHS will show the Otis video and discuss his art. Video link: vimeo.com/188102799
- **Pop-Up Store Saturday** coming this spring now that power has been reinstated to the shop!
- **Archival work** and education for everyone wanting to document family and local history

KGHS Board of Directors

Susan Morrow, President

Lorelei Evans, Sarah Fletcher, Mary Gilardi, Ross McKenna, Sydney Park, Marilee Rogers, Heather McPhail Sridharan, Richard Torney, Marlies Zeisler
Dewey Livingston, Author

Did you remember to renew your Membership?

If your KGHS renewal was due, you should have received a letter and remittance envelope asking for your continued support. It's also a good time to invite friends and neighbors to join. If you know of people who are interested in preserving and recognizing local history, please forward this newsletter to them and encourage them to become a member.

DO IT **ONLINE** NOW before you forget! ... **RENEW or JOIN NOW!**

- \$20 - Students & Seniors
- \$30 - Individuals & Families
- \$50 - Business Membership
- \$100 - Patron
- \$250 - Benefactor *
- \$500 - Historian *
- \$500- Business Partner *
- \$1000 + - Lifetime Membership*
- \$1000+- Lifetime Business Partner *

Or you can send a check: KGHS Membership, Box 236, Kentfield, CA 94914. Please include your name, level of membership, address, email and phone number. If you use a credit card number, please include your CVV code (we left it off our envelope!) Included with your membership is the quarterly newsletter, special invitations to member events and an invitation to volunteer on one of our committees.



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