

Keep Your Treasures Safe!

Treasures tell a Story

Do you have any treasures at home? You might think that treasures have to look like they do in pirate stories, a big box full of gold and precious jewels. But treasures can be all kinds of things. Maybe you have a collection, like trading cards or special stones. Or maybe it's just one special object, like a teddy bear or a book or a souvenir from your favorite trip. Maybe you have treasured photos of the people and things you love. What makes them a treasure is your love for them and the stories that they're connected to.

The History Center is full of all kinds of treasures from the past. Some of them are shiny and beautiful like a treasure from a story, and some of them look so plain you might wonder whether they belong in a museum at all. They are all very different from one another, but one thing that they all have in common is that they all tell a piece of the Story of York, and they all need a lot of extra care to keep them from getting old or damaged.

You may notice that your own special treasures no longer look exactly the same as they did when they were new. Time can change the way our favorite objects look in a lot of ways, and it can be very challenging to make sure they stay in good shape.

In a museum, the person who takes care of our treasures and keeps them safe is called a *Curator*. It is the Curator's job to clean the objects, to safely store and organize them, and to learn as much as possible about the stories connected to them. You probably don't have a curator at home to help care for your treasures, but you can be the curator of your own collection! I spoke with Rachel Warner, a curator and the Director of Collections at the York County History Center, to learn some facts about keeping precious objects safe.

Interview with Rachel Warner, Director of Collections

What inspired you to be a curator?

Lots of things inspired me to work in the Museum field – including visits to historic sites like Gettysburg as a kid, the State Museum, and movies like Indiana Jones that featured a fictional archeologist who went on amazing adventures that incorporated history and ancient relics. Indy would say to the villains “that belongs in a museum!” and I think that always stuck with me – the importance of preserving and sharing artifacts with everyone.

Did you have a collection when you were young?

I did – I collected rocks and organized them in egg cartons. I had ones of just about every mineral type and my favorites were ones like pyrite, mica, and bornite. I also was given a Spanish fan that belonged to my Great-Aunt Elena and that started me on collecting fans. As an adult, I also collect things like fabric, different types of plants, and landscape prints.

What are your favorite collections from the museum? And do you have a favorite treasure at home?

At the museum, one of my favorite collections is the Lewis Miller Art Collection. Lewis Miller was a folk artist that drew the people and scenes of everyday life in York in the early 1800s through the 1880s. Very few communities have a record of what life was like in this time period, so we are very lucky to have this collection and to be able to share it with the public.

My favorite object at home is probably a very special violet that grows in a pot that my grandma painted for me.

Where did the objects in the museum come from? How do you decide what to keep?

Most of the objects have been donated to the museum and a very small number have been purchased. We keep objects that tell the story of York County and the people that lived here.

What items from today might be interesting to Historians in the future?

This year has been a very challenging one for everyone, but at some point we will want to collect things like face masks that people made, journals they kept, signs they might have made for protests, or art that they made while in quarantine. These sort of objects will tell future generations what life was like in 2020.

Can you share a few tips for kids who have items and collections they would like to preserve?

One of the best things you can do with your collection is to keep it neat and well-organized. This will help you know what you have and what objects you might like to look for, and it will help you take better care of the objects so they stay in good condition and last a long time.

What should a child do if they find an object they suspect might be valuable to future Historians?

If you find an object that you think might have historic value, one of the best actions you can take is find out what the object is and how it was used. If it is very rare or tells an important story about how people lived, then it might be a good piece to offer to a museum. An adult can help you find a museum that best matches whatever the object is or what community it is important to and then you can contact someone at the museum to see if they might be interested in the object.

Anything else you'd like to share? Anything you think it would be important for kids to know?

Local history museums like the York County History Center help preserve the memories of our community and help us learn about our ancestors. Museum collections are also important because they are held in something called the public trust – this means that they are accessible and preserved for the benefit of everyone.

Where can young people who are interested in Curatorial work learn more?

Sometimes state parks, museums, or other history groups will do summer camps and that's a great place to learn about what museum workers do and if you might be interested in going to school for Museum Studies someday. You could also see about volunteering – maybe with a parent or grandparent – during the summer at a local museum or historical society.

Activity: Build a Damage-Free Display Case!

One way museums keep objects safe is to put them in a special box called a “display case.” Display cases are made from special materials that protect objects from things that could hurt them like dust, moisture, heat, and light. These cases tend to be expensive, but you can make your own display case using items you probably have around the house!

Note: This display case will protect your items from dust, but it is not made from acid-free materials. This means that items kept inside it for a long period of time could be damaged. It’s better not to keep anything especially fragile or valuable inside it, and to rotate which objects you display in it every couple of months. If you’d like to learn more about safe ways to store and display your treasures long term you can watch experts from the History Center discuss safe storage in [THIS VIDEO](#).

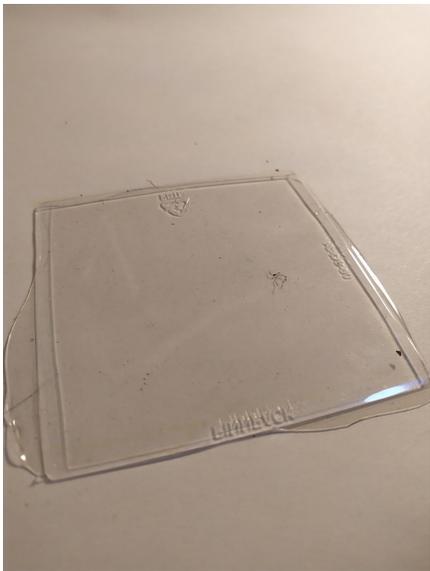
MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A grown up! This activity involves using tools that could be dangerous.
2. A sturdy cardboard box with a lid (a shoe box works well)
3. Foam core or corrugated cardboard
4. A clear plastic container, close o the same size as your box’s lid
5. Flat ribbon (in pinch, string will also work)
6. Straight pins or thumb tacks
7. Thin string like sewing thread or fishing line
8. A hot glue gun
9. A box cutter or scissors



You may also want to decorate the outside of your display case; acrylic paint works well, or modge podge and decorative paper.

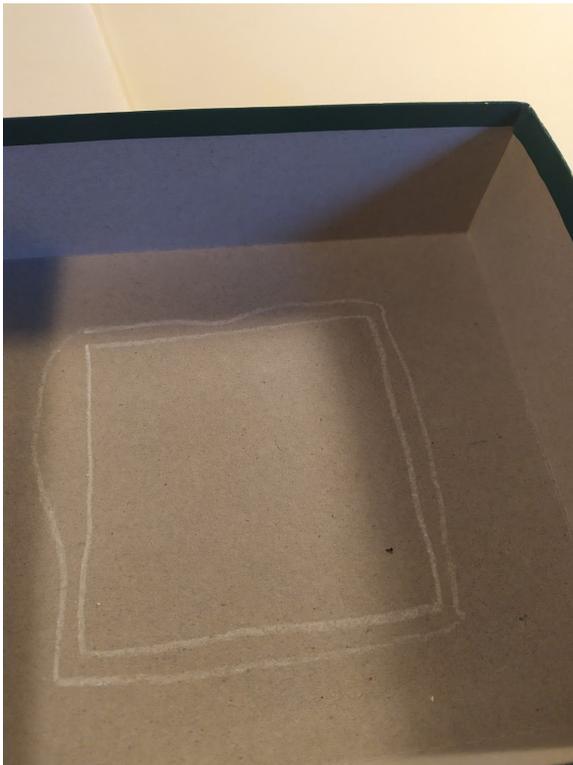
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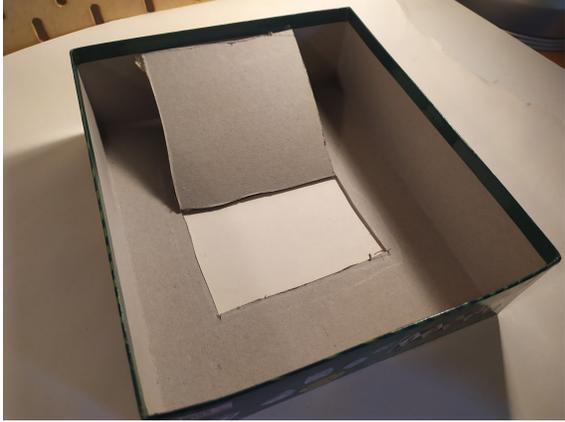
Ask your adult to help you use the box cutter to cut a large rectangle from your plastic container, a little smaller than the lid of your box



Trace this rectangle onto the lid of your box (don't worry about getting it perfect, this is just to give a general guideline)



Draw a square or rectangle inside the first one, leaving at least a border of at least a couple centimeters. This one should be more precise than the other, though it still doesn't need to be perfect



Use the box cutter to cut out the inner square. Set it aside for later.



Cut the foam core or corrugated cardboard so that it fits inside the base of your box. Glue it in place using the hot glue gun.



Use the thread and thumbtacks to secure your object to the foam core as shown. Be careful not to push the pins into your object- instead, use the string to keep the item in place and the pins to keep the strings in place



Cut the rectangle from step four a little smaller, and write a few facts about the treasure you'll be displaying. You can use the glue gun to attach it, or use painters tape so that it can be changed out to display future objects.

If you like, you can decorate your display case with paint, decorative paper, modge podge, stickers, or markers.