

## **General Guidelines for Handling Archival Materials**

The primary resources of the Fresno Historical Society Archives collections are rare and unique, and often fragile and at risk for damage. These guidelines for the use of archival materials have been drafted with the physical safety of the collection in mind. We depend upon our researchers to help us maintain the collection by following the archives guidelines for handling materials.

### **General:**

- Make sure your hands are clean when working on a collection.
- Food and drink (including lozenges, all types of chewing gum and bottled water) are not allowed in the reading area.
- Work only with pencil, a pad of paper and eraser will be provided for you. No ink pens or felt-tip pens.
- Avoid leaning on materials or stacking materials on each other, especially in an open position.
- Material should be used on a table; do not put any material on the floor or on your lap.

### **Manuscript Collections:**

- All materials should be handled with care. Avoid tipping containers, jostling, dropping or positioning on end.
- Do not lay note paper on any materials (such as a letter, book, map, etc.). Do not turn books, diaries, or journals face down on your work table.
- Loose sheets should be handled by their edges only.
- It is extremely important to preserve the original order of the documents within the folders and the boxes. Remove only one folder from a box at a time. Use an Out Card as necessary to mark your place. Do not place documents upside down or backwards in a folder.
- Support folders with hands at both sides when removing from container to prevent contents from falling out. Do not place full folders on end.
- Align sheets within folders so that ends are not protruding beyond the protection of the folder.
- If a mistake in arrangement is discovered or if you have a question, please notify the archives staff. Do not re-arrange the material.
- Do not lean on, write on, fold, trace, fasten or unfasten the documents. If a fastener needs to be removed to read a document, please ask the staff to remove the fastener.
- Take extra care with large items. Ensure that all sides are supported at all times. Avoid sagging edges by using a larger work surface. Ask archives staff for assistance if necessary.

**Bound Volumes:**

- Use only paper for bookmarks – archivist will provide you with archival bookmarks.
- Be aware of the condition of the books you are handling. Never force open a book with a tight binding.
- Do not stack opened books or place them face down.
- Please turn pages carefully at their outer edges only. Avoid touching the surface of pages. Flipping through pages quickly or licking your fingers to aid in turning pages can damage the paper.

**Photographs:**

- Cotton gloves, supplied by the archivist, must be worn when examining all photographic materials.
- Remove only one folder from a box at a time. If a mistake in arrangement is discovered or if you have a question, please notify the staff. Do not re-arrange the material.
- Touch only edges of image; never the image itself.
- Do not hold a print, drawing or photograph, even when mounted, by one hand only; always support it at its edges with both hands. Do not bend images.
- Limit movement and shifting of images within folders or containers. Avoid stacking folders.
- Staff must assist in the handling of fragile pictorial material.
- Whenever possible, copies of the photographs will be provided instead of the original to reduce wear and tear.