



Article: Thawing and Treating Water-Damaged Photographic Materials

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THAWING AND TREATING WATER-DAMAGED PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS

BARBARA LEMMEN

Presented at the 2009 PMG Winter Meeting in Tucson, Arizona

Every Photograph Conservator has likely had to deal with water-damaged photographs at some time. The Field is lucky to have some published research on the recovery of these objects; discussion of the practical aspects of treatment procedures is more limited.

This talk will review the speaker's experiences treating a wide variety of water-damaged photographic materials; black-and-white and color prints, glass and film negatives, slides, and albums. The majority of these materials arrived, frozen, at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in the period from 2001 to the present. The procedures for thawing, washing, and drying the objects will be summarized, as well as successful methods for tracking items and odor reduction. The treatment procedures used were based on previous work by other conservators, published processing methods for new prints and negatives, and standard photograph treatment methods.

The issue of decontamination and the research under way by other institutions on this topic will also be addressed.

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