

If your vault is below ground level, move it up to a dry, insulated, temperature controlled room. It is *possible* to insulate a basement sufficiently to control its humidity, but it is *very costly*.

If you cannot move the vault:

- ▶ Remove the records from the vault and into a dry, temperature controlled room, even if only temporarily. It is better to have them in a relatively safe dry room than in a damp vault. Monitor security, light and access, as well as temperature and humidity, while they are in this space.
- ▶ **If paper records are stuck together** – do not try to separate. If they are soaked, place them flat in a plastic container and deep-freeze. Then – *call the Archivist for the next step.*
- ▶ Dehumidify the room with the records in it – rent or borrow a dehumidifier; run it in the room for several days, (some can be emptied manually, some need a sink drain for the hose) or until the volume of extracted water goes down. (This works better in a small, enclosed room).

Do this with one manageable group of records at a time: while drying –

- ♦ Take records out of their boxes – fan out the records gently on tables, keeping them in their original order.
- ♦ Let air circulate between the pages by separating groups of pages, or files of papers resting in open boxes, with crumpled white unscented paper towel.

What we can do at the Archives:

We can do all of the above, and repair and stabilize, even restore most damaged records. We will also give them acid-free, buffered enclosure to prolong their readability and lifespan, and place them in a dry, fireproof vault. Rarely, we may have to reformat (scan, copy).

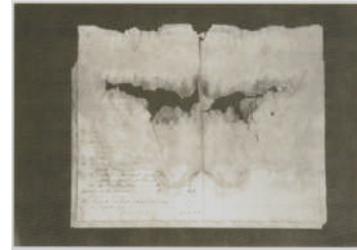
At any time, you may deposit the records to the Diocesan Archives for an appraisal of their condition and/or permanent storage. The Archivist will make the information contained in the records available to you any time you need it, and will also control access requested by others.

If you have questions, or if you think your records may have been, or are now, in danger from damp storage conditions, please contact the Diocesan Archives – we can help.

Ask for Lorraine Slopek, Diocesan Archivist at (902) 420-0717
or Email: archives@nspeidiocese.ca

The Diocesan Archives Committee of the Diocese of NS and PEI

Diocese of NS and PEI -- SYNOD 2005 -- PLEASE READ BEFORE SATURDAY MORNING...



*Mould-eaten register –NOT one of ours!!
Courtesy: "A Manual for Small Archives"*

**The dangers of water to
PARISH RECORDS**

THE NATURE OF PAPER:

Most parish records are made of paper, either natural plant or wood pulp; those that aren't are made of some other organic material, such as leather or vellum (beaten animal skin).

Organic material combined with water supports **Life!**

Unfortunately, this combination supports not only *human* life, but also the life of smaller creatures and plants, such as fungi, mould and small insects and their larvae. (*All God's creatures gotta eat!*)

Because these life forms are so tiny, it doesn't take much water to attract them and sustain them; that is why records can have these things growing in them for a long time without us larger beings noticing.

It could be argued that this is why we humans have an acute sense of smell, and an annoying little chemical called *histamine*, which closes our lungs and makes our noses run whenever we breathe in parts of living things that don't belong inside us and that we cannot see.

Although somewhat dangerous to use without protection, especially for people with allergy, **your eyes, nose and hands** are practically as good as any machines to detect the presence of water and/or pests *before* permanent damage occurs.

SIGNS OF LIFE-GIVING WATER!

What we can see on the paper is:

- Discolouration of the paper
- "Running" ink
- Rust marks around paper clips and staples
- Uniform "chew-marks"; holes, evenly scalloped edges
- Actual black "dust" – dead mould and spores (similar to what appears on your bathroom ceiling over the shower!)

What we can *smell* is:

- “earthy” acrid odour of nitrogen / ammonia (mould and mildew)
- “mushroom” odour (fungi)
- “musty” or “paint” odour – usually the smell of the paper and ink components themselves changing back into what they were before! (“rotting”) This can also indicate the presence of waste material of bacteria, “bookworms” and other less intellectual insects.

We humans also have a high sensitivity in our fingertips (and other parts of our skin) to detect temperature and humidity, and creepy crawly no-see-ums.

What we can *feel* is:

- Paper has a “clammy” or cold feeling even in a warm room
- Rough surface in patches – “bubbling” and sometimes mould spores stuck to the surface

Paper has an amazing capacity to absorb water because it is mostly made from plants that were designed to suck up water from the ground to get nourishment (tree trunks, leaves, cotton, linen).

Paper can double its weight with water absorption; then it may split file boxes and buckle metal shelving (a sure sign that the room is damp!).

(From records recovered from the Cathedral basement, the dehumidifier extracted **6-8 litres of water from 8-10 boxes of files at a time** on average **PER DAY**.)

An ounce of prevention is worth litres and litres of cure:

We know that fungi and mould love water and dead plants to feed on, but they also *hate dry air, daylight and too much oxygen* – these slow down their growth.

A double walled vault with a heat delay is good protection against **fire** – this is essential to the preservation of vital church records (as stated in Canon 40).

But if it is *below ground*, or in a room that is *not insulated* without *temperature control*, it can cause another serious problem for your records that may go undetected for a long time.

An airtight vault is fine if it is **dry**, but it should be opened briefly on a regular basis. Otherwise it provides a nice dark, low-oxygen “cottage country” for fungi and mould.

Before the fungi, mould or pests begin to eat, they can be present for a long time, waiting for **moisture** to reach a level that revives them and

breaks down the paper chemically. By keeping humidity low and oxygen high, we keep mould spores, fungi and dormant pest larvae away.

So...why are we so worried about water?

We are SURROUNDED BY OCEAN. Although this has its benefits, water damage to records not only obscures information, but also can be the cause of much work and expense to salvage, repair, and re-format.

Worst-case scenario – the record must be discarded and pieces of our story – of the history of the life of the Church in our diocese -- may be lost forever.

TIME is the relative factor that determines the final outcome -- *if damp conditions in contact with our records are allowed to persist.*

Restored: Found taped to the weathervane, St. Mary's Auburn

It is **NEVER TOO LATE** to save the records!

- Drying out the records thoroughly

-- Will cause mould and pests to DIE!

- Brushing away debris (carefully)
- Changing their enclosure (boxes, folders, binders)
- Allowing good ventilation without severe fluctuation in temperature
- **KEEPING RECORDS DRY** in a **dry** vault in a **dry** room above ground

-- Will PREVENT THE LIFE FORMS FROM COMING BACK!

What you can do in the parish:

Monitor the temperature and humidity in your storage space (over time to see fluctuation) with a thermometer that measures humidity. (Canadian Tire: \$5 - \$25. Cheap ones may not be as accurate). Place one in the vault too, if possible. The ideal readings for record storage are 19-20 degrees Celsius and 45 - 50% RH.

If you find your humidity readings are too high (or if you can feel or see water damage already) –

