



Archival Conservation

Introduction

Virtually every unit of the National Park Service has museum collections. The Park Service makes every attempt to protect and conserve those collections. Saguaro National Park’s museum collections include archeological holdings, history and ethnology objects (12,469 cataloged items), natural history collections which include a vast number of flora and fauna specimens as well as geological and paleontological specimens (5059 cataloged objects), as well as archival collections (photographs, digital media, administrative documents, project documentation, and historical documents (36,000 cataloged objects).

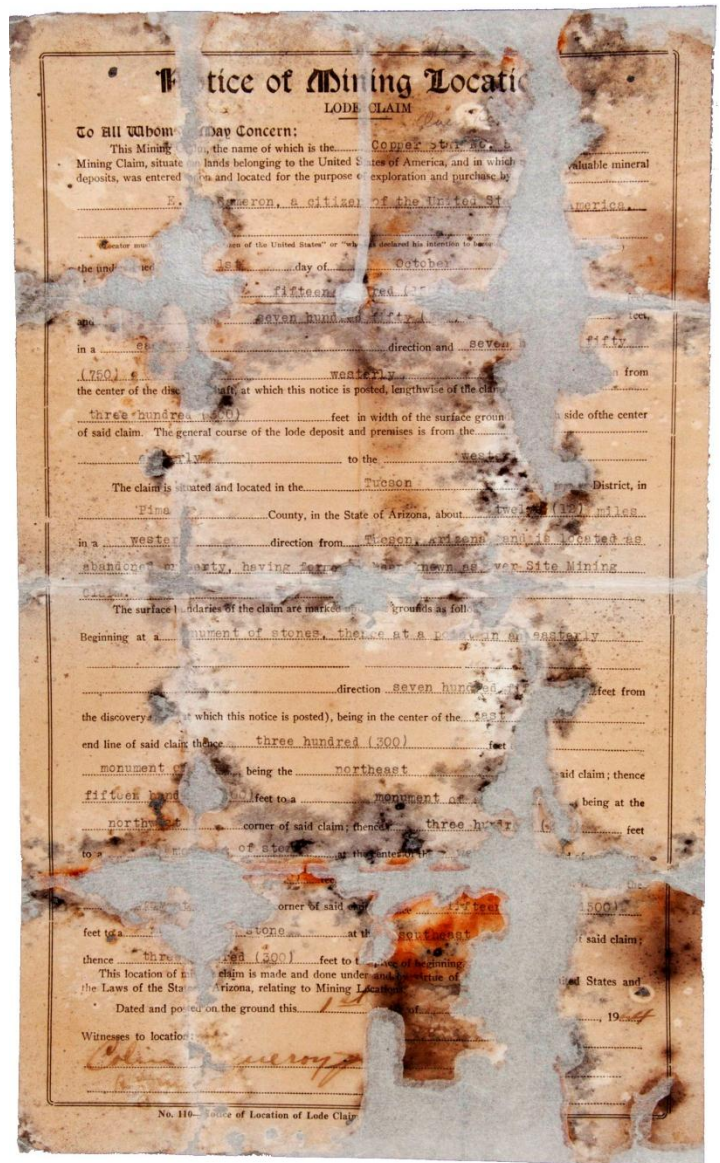
These objects are curated at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center’s (WACC) climate-controlled museum repository here in Tucson. WACC is staffed by professional museum curators, archivists, conservators, and a small administrative staff.

Case Study

In early 2014 a mining claim was discovered in the Tucson Mountain District of Saguaro National Park. The claim was cached inside a monument (rock cairn) (see Mining Claim Brief). The mining claim was folded up and placed inside a tobacco tin before being placed in the monument. When the document was recovered it was discovered to be fragile and portions of the document had already been lost (see photograph at upper right).

Conservators at WACC were asked to conduct a condition assessment and propose treatment plan. It was decided that the best course of action was to unfold the paper, back it with acid-free paper, and place the document between two sheets of mylar.

To unfold the document it was placed in a humid micro-environment which relaxed the paper so that it could be unfolded. This process not only helped preserve the document, it also allows it to be read, and makes the document accessible to researchers (see photograph at lower right).



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