

BIRCH COVE PARISH RECORDS RECOVERY.

The Birch Cove parish records (bound registers) were stolen from the parish in a portable vault in November 2006 and found in a gully in April 2007 (still partly within the opened vault) submerged in water and ice, where the thieves had discarded them. They were returned to the parish soaked with water, partially frozen, with some leaf and mud debris, but no perceptible mold. We instructed the churchwarden to immediately wrap them in 2-inch thick parcels or individually, and place flat in a deep freezer in the parish.

Fred Haley delivered them to the Diocesan Archives still frozen solid on November 21, 2007



DAY 1: (Nov 21, 2007) – 4 hours.
CONDITION: books were deposited frozen and wrapped in brown paper and plastic wrap – 3 parcels. First parcel was frozen in curled state; paper became mushy and fragile on edges within 1 hour of contact with air in room. Some pine needle and leaf debris stuck to outer pages. Brown-orange colour staining on the comers. Visible ink bleeding on some of page edges.

PROBLEM: Paper towel cannot be used – will stick to pages. Book cannot be gripped and moved easily until exterior dry, unless handled flat.

METHOD FOLLOWED: The CCA's Preservation Committee's paper by Betty Walsh, "Salvage Operations for water damaged collections: a second glance." And her sources. Air-drying method for soaked or frozen books. At some stage the records may be treated as documents if bindings become loose.

1. Cooled down Harris room, set up dehumidifier close to table.
2. Removed wrapping from one parcel (paper stuck to outer pages – no hard cover remaining) No information damaged on exterior of frozen mass.
3. Placed other parcels as is in Binney Hall deep freezer.
4. Placed book on "head" – spine vertical in container with polyester batting underneath, supported by paper cups, to drain.

(Defrosting: Day 1 and 2 repeated for the other two books using china cups instead of paper – the cups give a heavy, strong and even, waterproof support with no rough edges)



DAY 2: --3 hours

The centre of the book is still frozen.

1. Fans directed outward to the outdoors, employed to provide circulation. Door opened to air conditioned room.
2. Odour of frozen meat detected in paper.
3. Turned onto spine. Outer pages supported by polyester batting and reinforcement but kept on its spine all day.
4. Dehumidifier half full (1 quart water sucked from the room in 24 hours).

DAY 3; --3 hours

Book is completely defrosted but pages still damp. Strong enough to separate without sticking. Observed that every page has some soluble ink running stains but most writing still legible.

1. laid book flat open in middle for even pressure on spine.
2. Interleaved with paper towel every $\frac{1}{4}$ " while smoothing out 1" buckle
3. blotter and light pressure applied for 2 hours.
4. dehumidifier has removed 2 gallons from the room with increased circulation.
5. Paper towel removed and exchanged with blotters.
6. Was able to brush off sand and earth – it is terra cotta clay! (explains brown-orange colour)
7. Removed rusty paper clip – rusted through 4 pages.
8. Left overnight under 5-6-lb. weights. Fans, air conditioner.

DAY 4 (Saturday Nov 24) –2 hours:

Paper gained slightly more resilience. Middle of book not receiving as much drying air. Buckle still perceptible. Spine still soggy and slightly dessicated. Only about a quart of water extracted by the dehumidifier.

1. Removed wet interleaving.
2. Replaced interleaving – $\frac{1}{2}$ book each page interleaved.
3. Removed flyleaves and cloth at spine (hanging off).
4. Was able to brush off pine needles and debris without rupturing paper surface on some pages.
5. Turquoise ink has washed out of several pages and imprinted (migrated) through 3-4 pages on either side. Found turquoise powdered dots of dried ink – brushed off easily (not mould).
6. Supported each half of book laid open with $\frac{1}{2}$ ' polyester batting to relieve pressure on spine. Used both paper towel and blotters to even out pressure against bound edge of pages.
7. Left overnight under light weights. (2 lbs.) with fans and air conditioner on. Room cool and dry.

DAY 5, Sunday – did not come in; records left in the same position for 36 hours.

DAY 6, Monday Nov 26, 2007:

1. Changed interleaving: noticed 3 pages had stuck – separated each page to make sure no sticking was occurring and interleaved every 3 – 5 pages.
2. Noticed centre of book not drying as quickly as edges.

DAY 7:

1. Removed weights for part of the day to allow air flow to book centre.
2. Pages noticeably drier – checked each page again before changing interleaving. Left book still under light weights. Used paper towel only, as blotter sheets were buckling and thickness pulling on spine.
3. Odour has decreased – transferred to paper towel and blotter papers.

DAYS 8-10:

1. Repeated day 7 until book thoroughly dry.

RESULT: Book is readable, although stained and information obscured by ink bleeding; cover discarded, string-bound spine is intact – pages slightly buckled. Stored flat in buffered box.

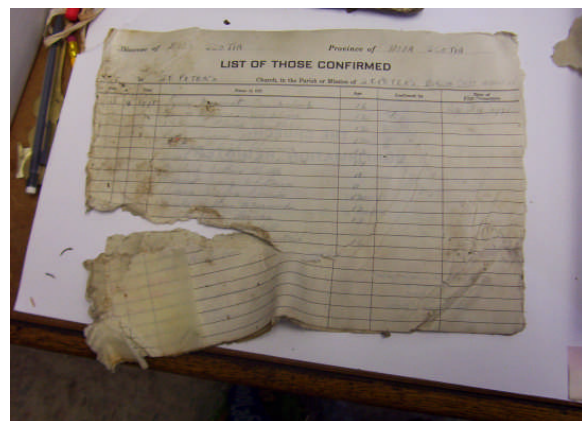
This procedure has been repeated for the other two books with excellent results.



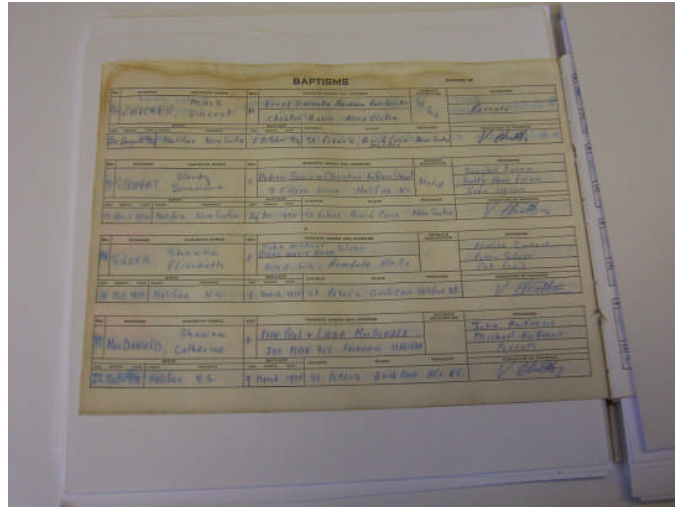
Books 2 and 3: Interleaved with blotters and drying.

We continued to use the CCA's Preservation Committee's paper by Betty Walsh, "Salvage Operations for water damaged collections: a second glance." And her sources, an air-drying method for soaked or frozen books, with some modifications learned from drying the first book.

One page of the last book had been glued to the inside cover – we did manage to save it, and it can be read. The covers fell apart and had to be discarded.

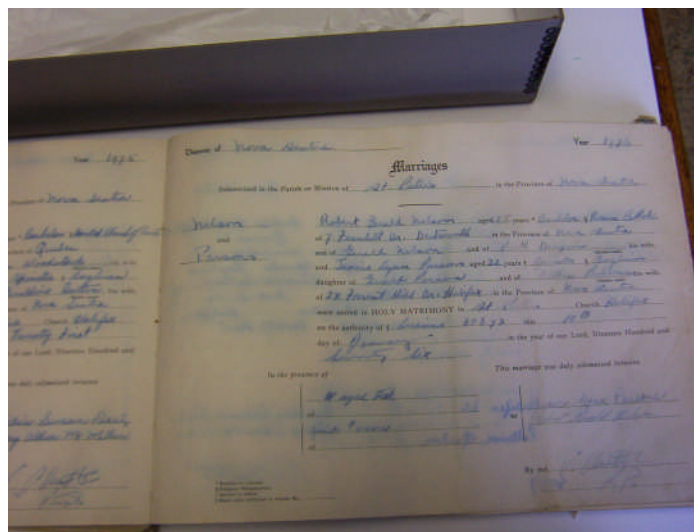


2nd book: Dried. Stained, but quite legible.



Different inks stained differently.

Below is the first book, the thickest. All the staining was permanently fixed in the paper before they were frozen, but legibility actually improved as the paper lightened when dried. This turquoise ink went through several pages, but cleaned up well after it turned to powder!



These are all now wrapped in buffered acid-free tissue, stored flat in a buffered box.