

Ephemera:

Saving the real scraps of our lives

Who knew that diapers, a report card and a fire could be such treasures? I certainly did not. I found a receipt for a diaper laundry service in my parent's paperwork. Thank goodness my mom was a pack rat because I never thought of diapers as anything but disposable; here's proof of a different era. Infant Di-Dee Service charged \$18 for five weeks. Also tucked away was one of my dad's report cards from the late 1930s. His name was typewriter-typed on yellowish 3- by 6- inch cardstock. His number grades were handwritten, and my grandma signed the back every semester.

As for the fire, my husband and I discovered the hazards of votive candles when nightclub owners place them at shoulder height. After he and his shirt escaped a fiery death, he asked, "Can you scrapbook this?" Of course I can; I'm a memory artiste. I cut the shirt into pieces, preserving the burn and label tag, and placed it inside a self-adhesive, acid-free plastic envelope. I stuck that envelope along with a photo of my husband to the page and voilà! When I look at that page, I remember the hot crowded bar and coming out of the bathroom smelling roasted marshmallows. My husband grabbed my arm with a hushed, "We have to leave now."



Diana Hirsch

Memorabilia take you back in time, and I have collected some eclectic items, such as high school A+ tests printed from purple mimeograph machines—remember those? I used to think of "ephemera" as some vintage or antique collection, not a wedding napkin. Dictionary.com defines ephemera as "...items designed to be useful or important for only a short time, especially pamphlets, notices, tickets, etc."

I confess; I am a photoholic, but I will give up a picture to include a used gift card on my layout any day. Why? Just as children grow up too quickly, our life's details slip away. Your head would spin dizzy seeing a 2003 receipt showing that gas cost \$1.79/gallon.

Ephemera are careful deliberate details that can be collectible autographs or sentimental ribbons from a wedding shower. My husband developed a ritual of writing details on itemized meal receipts, such as, "Dinner after Henry Ford: Rock Stars' Cars & Guitars exhibit." I treasure the reminder of those events and his perspective.

I believe in the authenticity of ephemera, so I include the original whenever possible. I am not careless in doing so, however. I first scan everything, front and back, on my home scanner. A digital file is easier to maintain than boxes and boxes of paper and lets me replicate it if I want to. Laminating can be dangerous because the heat from the process can completely darken and destroy images.

Most ephemera I have are paper products, so to prevent them from deteriorating I protect them with archival spray, favoring Archival Mist. You want to lightly sweep a coating on both sides, but not enough to wet the paper. If you do overspray, no worries; you cannot over-protect it.

I adhere postcards and paint swatches directly to the page, but if it will break your heart to alter your ephemera in any way, there are options. Photo corners hold business cards and ultrasound scans snugly in place. Vellum envelopes let you see through to your original concert ticket or subway token. Manila envelopes give you access to high school diplomas or awards while keeping them safe and private with a tie closure. Pockets are another interactive solution, good for airline tickets and newspaper articles, while giving you extra room on top for additional photos and journaling.

Like anything else, if you want to use ephemera, you need a plan. Substitute ephemera for embellishments in a sketch. For ex-



The open-ended pocket is a great way to store tickets with extra room on top for a title.

ample, make paper flowers out of holiday wrapping paper. Plan the layout around the ephemera. Put the item down first and work around it on the page. Most items are square or rectangular, so a grid layout works as a

starting point.

If you are like me and have a lot of photos that you simply must use, consider investing in a personal photo printer to make smaller pictures. I bought one for \$100. It's small

Ephemera ideas to inspire you:

- Restaurant menus (takeout and otherwise)
- High school bus pass
- Bar coaster
- Construction paper Halloween bat from a college frat party
- Disney Dollar
- My dancer number for Penn State Dance Mara-THON
- Handwritten notes from my dad
- Star Trek pre-paid phone cards
- Moving box stickers
- Wine bottle label
- Buttons (pinned through cardstock)
- Old ID cards
- Candy wrappers from unique places or retro wrappers
- Cake mix box top we made on our first Thanksgiving together in Michigan



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I included my husband's burnt shirt on my layout using a sealable plastic sleeve designed to hold memorabilia.



This layout showcases a business card, receipt, clothing tag, along with photos and journaling.

enough to tuck away at home and portable enough for crops.

You saved your child's lock of hair from that first haircut, but what about the business card of the hair salon? If this has not been a priority before, here is an opportunity to infuse depth and richness into your albums. If you do not have time to use everything now, store items in a seal-lock plastic bag and label the outside. Perhaps I am obsessive in what I preserve, and

I have no shame about that. These keepsakes validate my life, the time I live in. This is your heritage.

Diana Hirsch is an award-winning freelance writer who has been passionate about scrapbooking since her childhood days. She can be reached at diwolf@aol.com or through her blog at www.wolfhowlings.wordpress.com.

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