

Costume Storage and Handling

- Always make sure to wash your hands before handling historic costume.
- Costume can be stored hung but when at all possible should be stored in an acid-free box. If you are storing more than one costume per box, always put the heavier item on the bottom. Try to store cotton and linen together; wool and silk together.
- Find a clean area large enough to accommodate your costume when it is laid flat, such as a bed, a large table, or a sheet on the floor. Place the costume item face down so that when you are finished folding it you will be looking at the front.
- Using a measuring tape or the top of your box, estimate how few times you need to fold the costume in each direction in order for it to fit into the box. Always plan ahead so as to have as few folds as possible.



- Use “snakes,” or rolled up pieces of acid-free tissue, to pad arms, legs, shoulders, etc., and all folds. If you are folding a very long item, such as a wedding gown, use additional snakes to fill out the body cavity and skirt.
- Dresses, or other items with fragile areas, should be folded so that the bodice, or the fragile area, is on top. Start with the item face down. Pad and fold the item so that the final fold brings the bodice or fragile area to the top.
- You can also lay two twill-tape ties width-ways across the box. Line the box with tissue. Place the folded costume into the box. Cover with tissue. Tie the ties so that the tissue is being held in place but not so tightly as to dent the costume.
- If you have more than one box, label each with a photo of the costume/s it contains to avoid unnecessary unfolding.
- Always store textiles on the main floors of your house if possible rather than an attic or basement. Ideal locations are on a closet shelf or under a bed. Make sure the box is safe from pets and accidental mishandling.
- Once a year open the box and check for signs of insects or damage.

