

Historical Mansion Adds Simplicity and Efficiency to Its Collection

Over 100 years of family history are stored within the Rhode Island home.



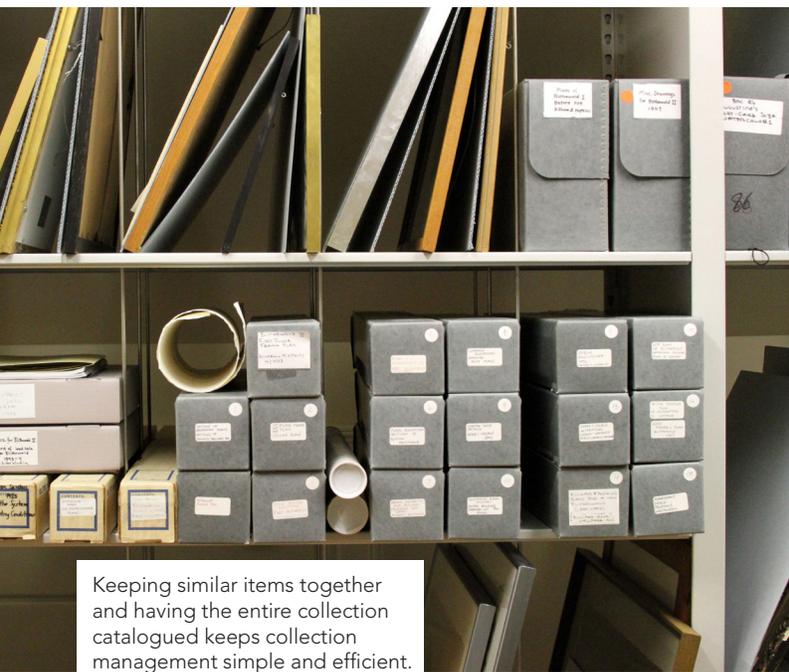
Blithewold Mansion, in Bristol, Rhode Island, was once the summer home of the Van Wickle family. After a fire destroyed the original shingle-style house in 1906, it was rebuilt in stone as an English Country style manor. Originally, the property boasted over 70-acres of land located on the shores of Narragansett Bay, and included a tennis court, golf course, arboretum and a extensive gardens. Bessie Van Wickle and her daughter Marjorie were keen horticulturists and are remembered for their gardening accomplishments. Today, anyone who visits the home will see it almost exactly as it was in 1910. Recreated from family photographs and an article featured in *Country Life Magazine*, the rooms are arranged as they were then, with all of the original furnishings and most of original wallpapers. The gardens remain much as they were designed over a hundred years ago.

Blithewold Mansion holds a variety of events throughout the year including weddings, garden workshops, concerts and a Christmas exhibit. One of the most interesting things about Blithewold is the wide range of information that has been preserved by the families who have occupied it. Margaret Whitehead has worked at Blithewold for the past 23 years. In her position as Curator, Margaret works with family archives and materials that are stored in the attic of Blithewold. Over 8,000 letters and 5,000 photographs along with diaries, costumes, and artwork are included the collection.

With the collection growing every year, Margaret and her preservation team needed a better way to keep track of all of the materials being stored. When cataloging each piece was not enough, they looked at better storage solutions to fit their limited space.

"We wanted to put our storage in a much better position for retrieval," said Whitehead.





Keeping similar items together and having the entire collection catalogued keeps collection management simple and efficient.



Better organization makes for less time with an archived collection, and more time for display and curation.

A space management company that they had previously used recommended Spacesaver storage solutions. With a local representative nearby in Massachusetts, they were able to work with sales reps and their management team to create a solution that fit their specific needs.

"Having every item's information on a computer means that anyone who comes in can figure out where a piece is and find it very quickly," she said.

"The team came in and measured all the boxes we had, and all of the objects in the collection and came up with a plan for three of the rooms," said Whitehead. "We removed closets, a hallway and a bathroom to make more space."

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— Margaret Whitehead, Curator, Blithewold Museum

Items that are alike such as letters, photographs and horticulture information are kept together and in chronological order. Each piece is now safe, accessible and in logical sequence for interpretation which makes it easier for Margaret and other employees to compare and cross-reference material.

When the process for moving everything started, Margaret was one of few who knew exactly where everything was. Along with the additional organized space, they have implemented an electronic cataloging system that will record where every piece is stored.

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To learn more about Spacesaver Storage Solutions and how a Spacesaver Storage Specialist can help you overcome your storage challenges, please visit www.spacesaver.com or call 1-800-492-3434.



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