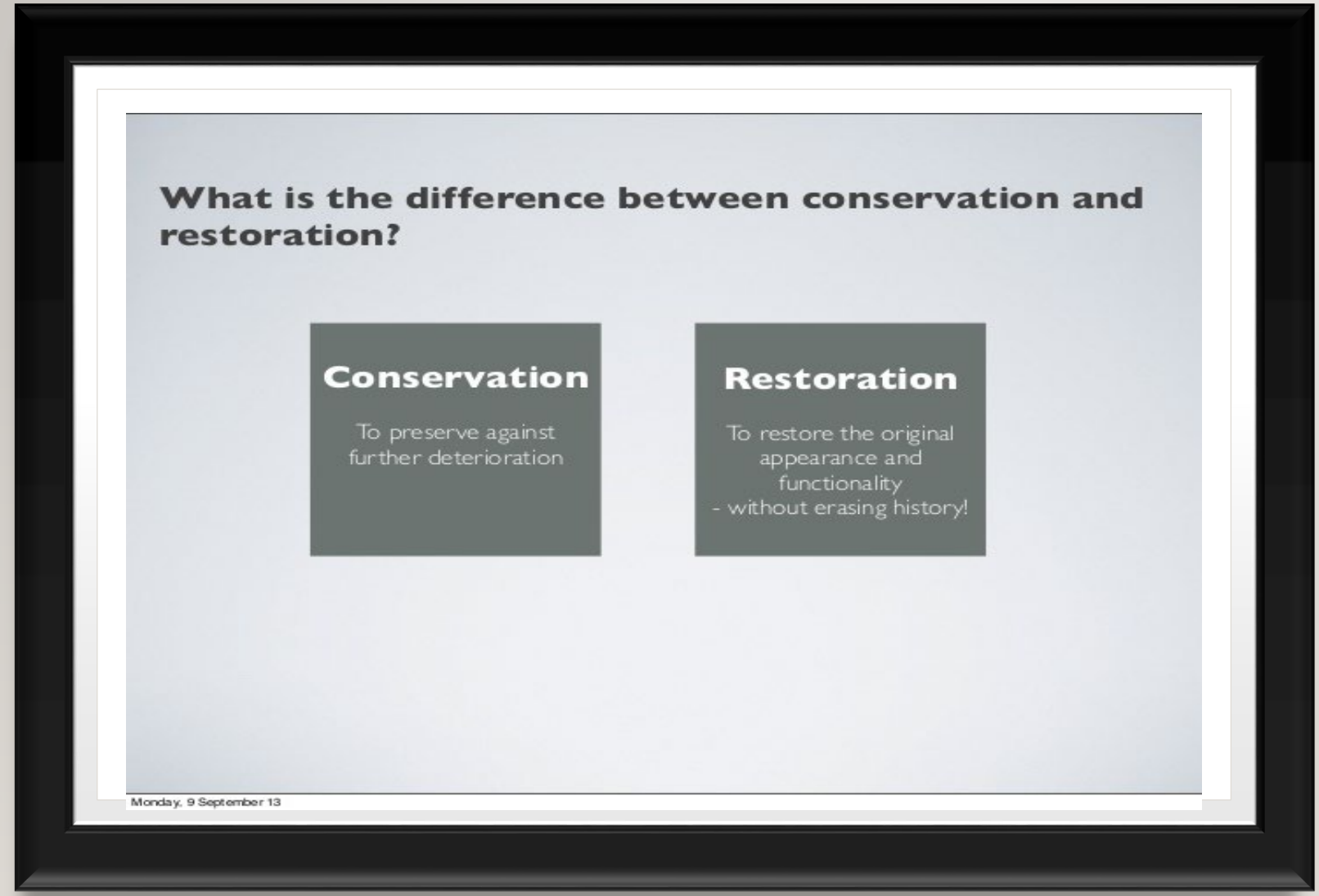
CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION?

SAVING SAN DIEGO'S HISTORY – ONE STEP AT A TIME

Why are public records so important?

"Records are utilitarian in nature, and are created to fulfill a business function and document business processes. . . . They are created in the first instances to control or direct an organization and to help orient staff to a common goal or purpose. They have residual value because they document the outcomes of the directing and controlling activities and because they provide evidence of an organization's rights as well as its obligations to its staff and society." *(1)*



CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION?

Dependent on the record and the value, sometimes you may need to Restore and Conserve.

CONSERVATION HIERARCHY

Severe damage like iron gall ink corrosion, mechanical damage, moisture and infestation due to the physical nature of the objects, which are made of organic materials. The kind and level of damage differs country to country. Tropical circumstances like a high temperature and a high humidity have an accelerating effect on the decay of the archives.

TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR BOUND ARTIFACTS MAY INCLUDE:

Surface-cleaning to remove surface dirt and dust

Mold removal

Removing mending tapes and adhesive residues

Mending tears with either Japanese paper and starch paste adhesive, solvent-set tissue or archival heat-set tissue

Re-sewing loose pages

Deacidification / alkalization of acidic papers

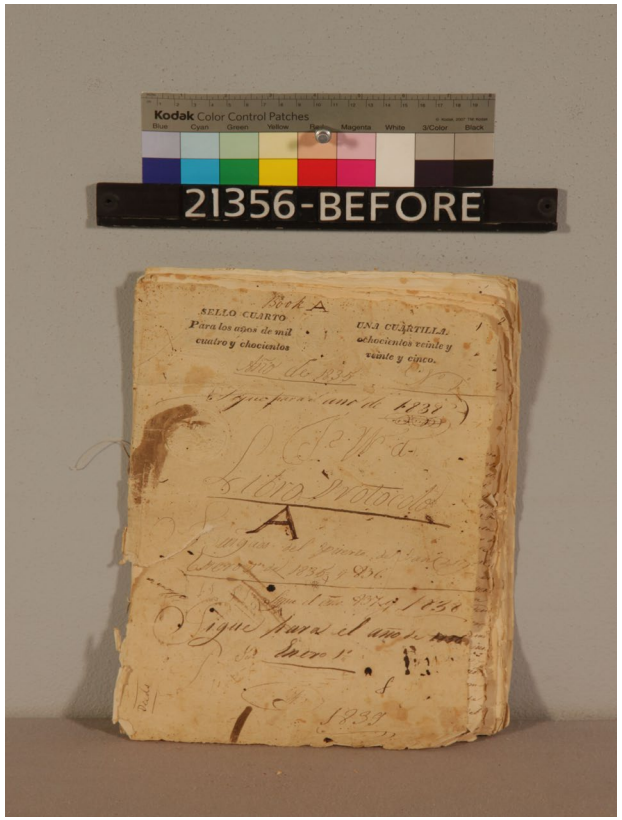
Aqueous washing to remove ingrained dirt and to reduce acidity and stains

Restoration of leather, cloth, paper or vellum covers

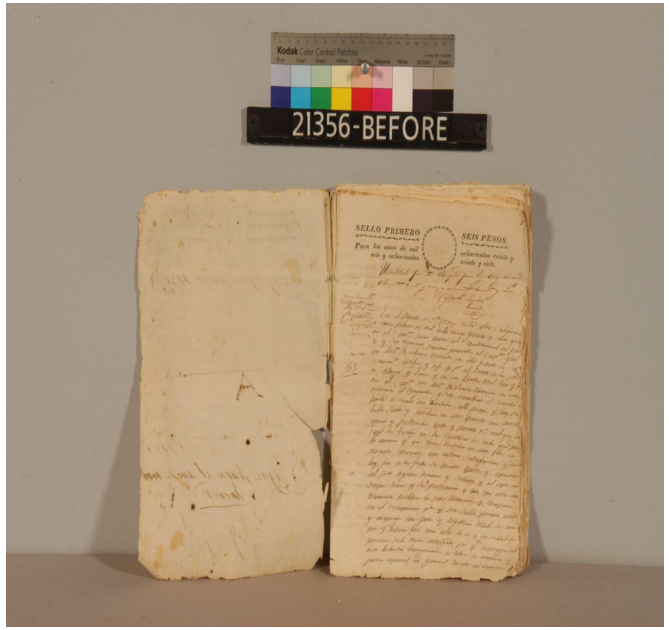
Gold or blind tooling historic, period styles

Books with deteriorated covers rebound in a similar style and material to preserve the principle of provenance

Custom-designed housing such as drop-spine boxes and four-flap enclosures



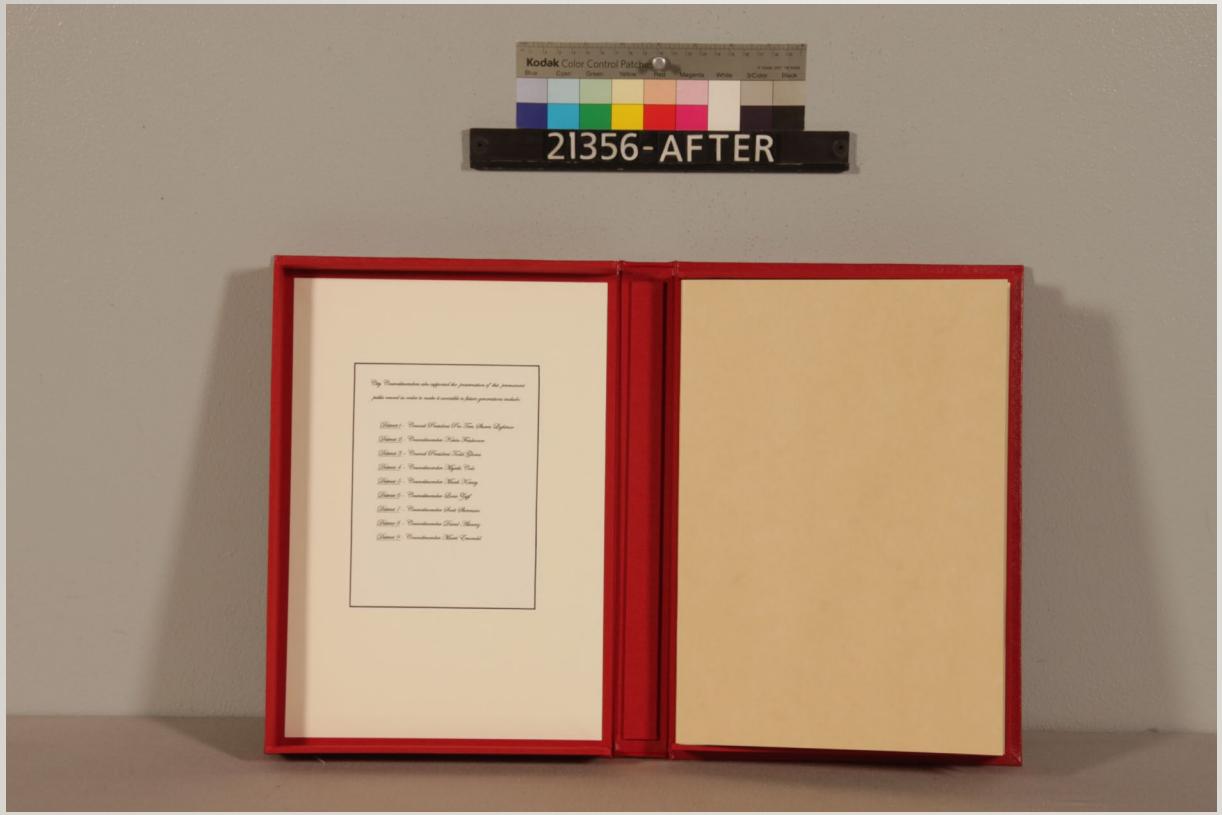
Threats to these formats and ways to identify when they are at risk



"PORT OF COURT" IS ONE OF THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO'S MOST SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL HOLDINGS TO DATE (1835-1839)

The linen thread “Port of Court (1835-1839)” will be indefinitely safeguarded

Clamshell boxes are used specifically for the rare records in the highest form in conservation. The lid closes tightly for protection against dust, dirt and other harmful atmospheric pollutants



TRIAGE APPROACH

Each record presents an explanation in our city's history. It is our duty to prevent the biological decay of these one-of-a-kind legal and historical records.

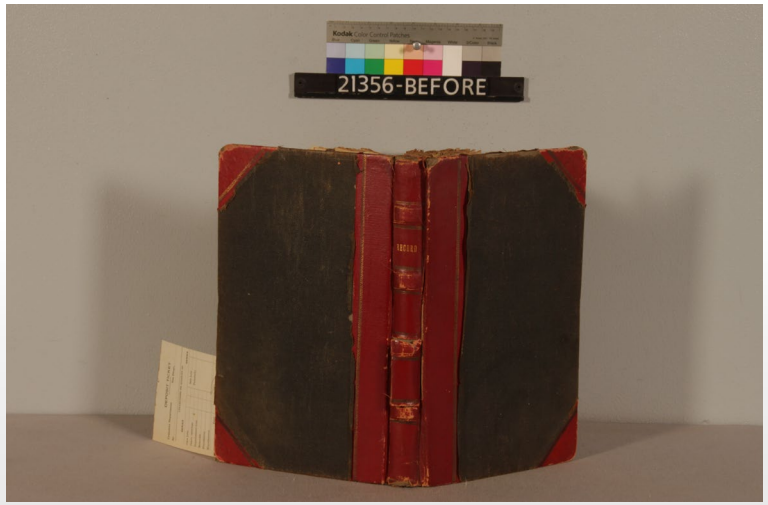
Preservation is
the combination of activities, prioritization, and
planning that extends the useful life of your
collections and makes them ***accessible***.

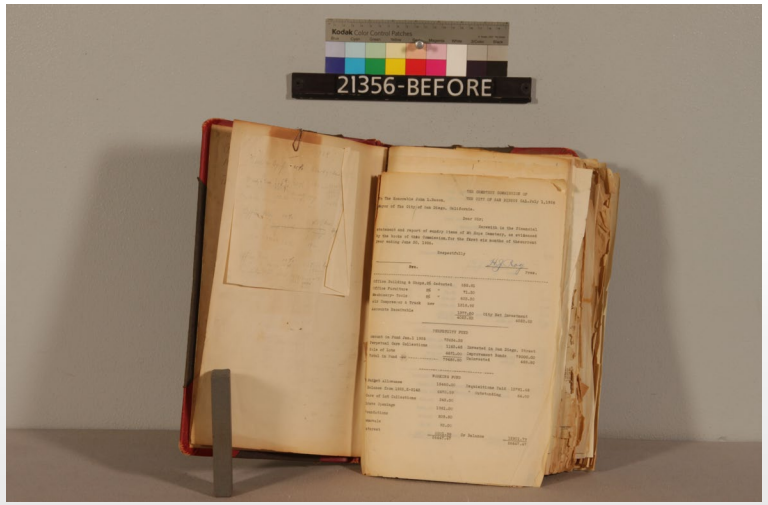
DAMAGE IS IRREVERSIBLE ONCE THE RECORD HAS BEEN CONSUMED BY MOLECULAR DAMAGE

The process of identifying materials to be preserved because of their ***enduring value***, especially those materials to be physically transferred to an archives.
--SAA Glossary, 2005

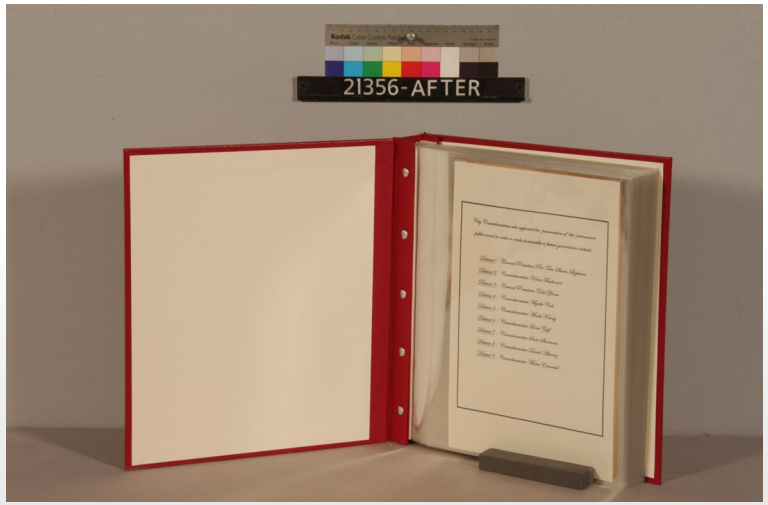
PRESERVATION IS NOT……

- Justification for making collections inaccessible
- Too expensive, too complicated or too much work when you prioritize and plan
- Limited to professional conservators





BEFORE PHOTO OF MOUNT HOPE RECORD OF CEMETERY COMMISSION, 1920-1926



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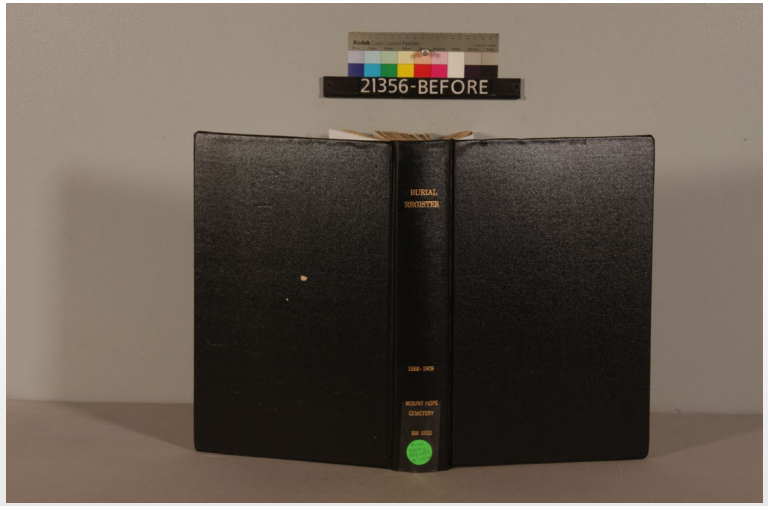
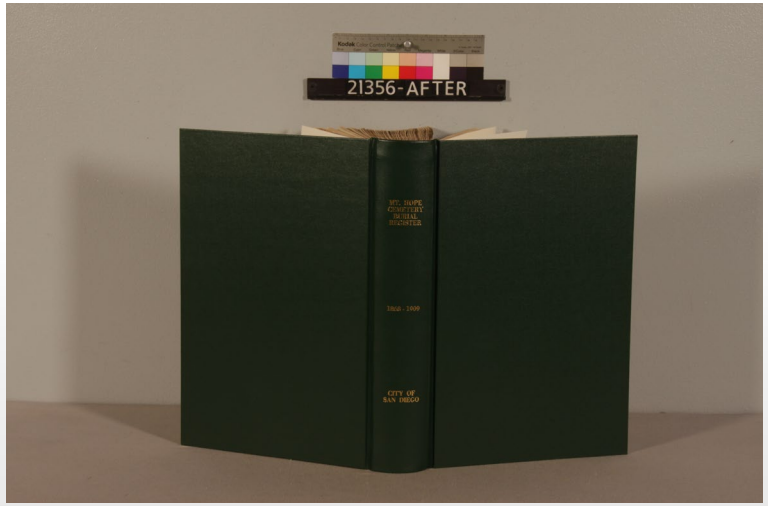
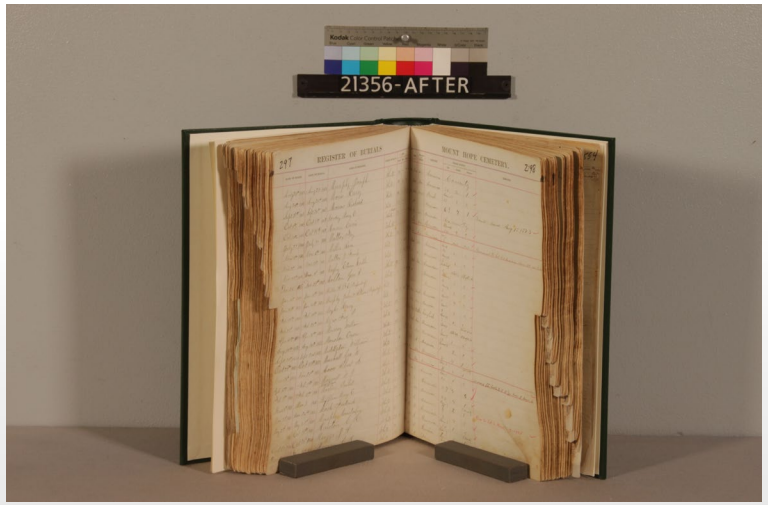


BEFORE PHOTO OF MOUNT HOPE BURIAL REGISTER, 1868-1909





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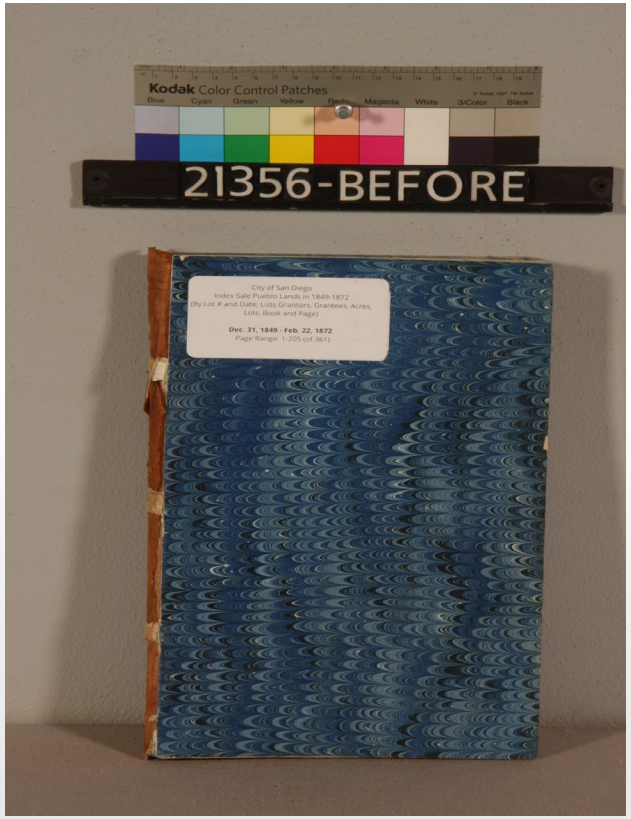
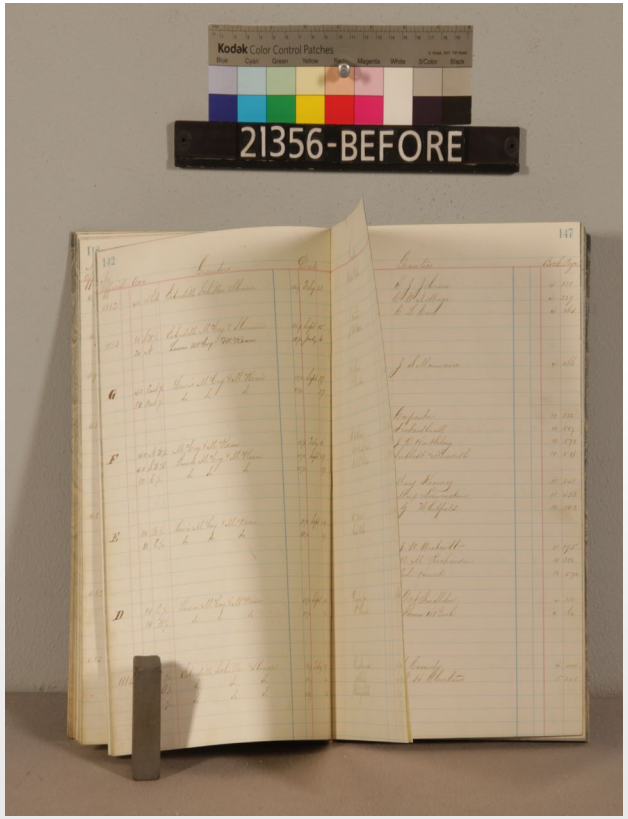
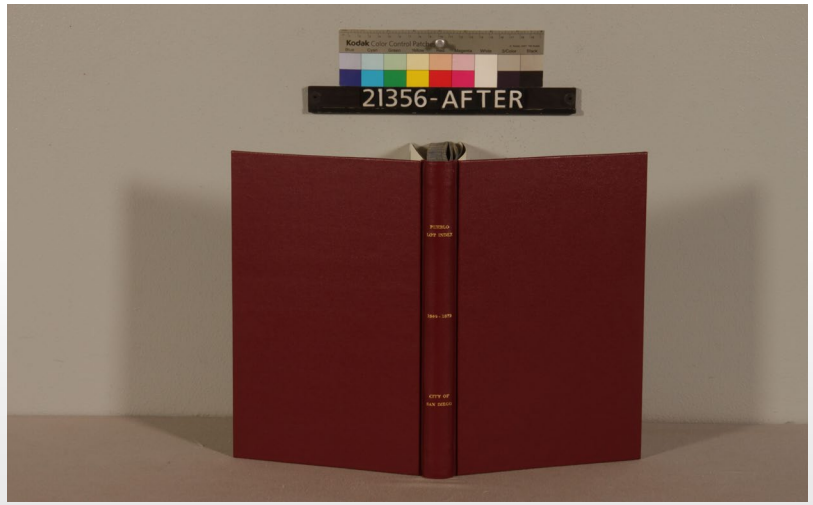
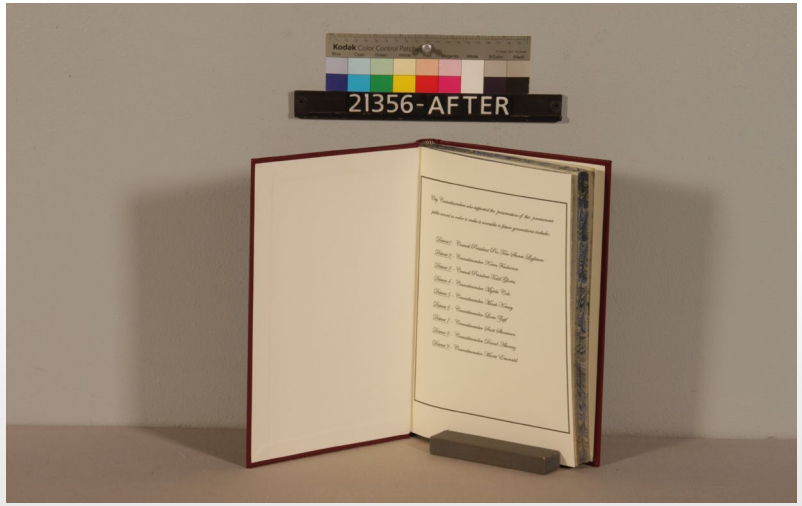
BEFORE PHOTO OF PUEBLO LOT INDEX, 1849-1872









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