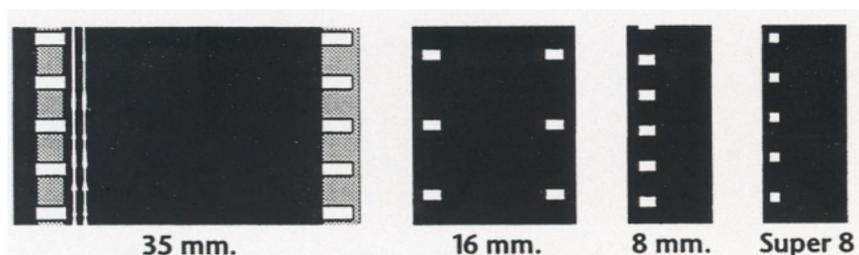


HOW DO I IDENTIFY FILM?



RECORD THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

- What is on the can or container? Are there any notes?
- Check the condition of the film – is it brittle, do the edges curl, is there obvious damage?
- Is the film negative or positive? Color or black & white?
- Are there sprocket holes on one side or both (single or double perforations)?
- Is there sound? Magnetic sound is usually a brown stripe along one side; optical sound is a black wavy pattern.
- The head and tail are usually more worn than the rest.
- The film may be wound with the tail out.

SOME DATE CLUES

- 1923 – first 16mm camera for amateurs
- 1932 – 8mm film
- 1935 – Kodachrome – color film
- 1950s – 35mm safety film in wide use
- 1965 – Super 8 film

HOW SHOULD I STORE FILM?

Film benefits from a stable environment with low temperature and low humidity. Store film in clean containers lying flat and avoid frequent changes in temperature and humidity.

NITRATE FILM

Up to the early 1950s 35mm film was almost always made on a cellulose nitrate base, which is highly unstable and flammable. Inspect it regularly and store in an appropriate location. In cases of advanced deterioration, nitrate film is subject to spontaneous combustion.

VINEGAR SYNDROME

Nonflammable acetate (also called 'safety') film is also subject to deterioration. The telltale sign is a vinegar odor, indicating the presence of acetic acid. Heat and humidity accelerate decay. Films with a strong vinegar smell or visible acetic acid crystals must be isolated from other films and copied soon.

“Film and video give people a reflection of themselves, a moving image of culture and tradition, a context.”

-Pam Wintle, NHF founding board member, film archivist,
Smithsonian Human Studies Film Archives



85 Main Street
PO Box 900
Bucksport, ME.04416
www.oldfilm.org
207.469.0924

NHF AT A GLANCE

Northeast Historic Film (NHF) collects, preserves, and makes accessible the moving image history of northern New England. The nonprofit organization runs a community cinema in the 1916 Alamo Theatre, and stores thousands of hours of videotape and more than 10 million feet of film in a cold storage vault.

NHF represents the world of film to local and regional communities through screenings of titles in commercial release as well as culturally and historically significant film and video. Our story to date has been one of simultaneously teaching about, advocating for, and creating a resource. For more information, visit us at www.oldfilm.org.

SERVICES

Our Technical Services Department handles intake, inspection, and transfer of film. We provide services for those wishing to store film in the NHF conservation center, as well as those who wish to continue storing their own films.

To transfer your home movies to a more accessible format, or to find out more about proper handling and storage, call Tech Services at 207.469.0924.

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY OLD FILM?

DO NOT PROJECT IT!

Film shrinks with age and becomes fragile. Projecting shrunken film risks permanent damage by ripping sprocket holes, stressing splices and scratching the image. Most home movie footage has no negative and is likely the only copy.

CAREFUL HAND INSPECTION IS OK

In a clean area, carefully unwind the first few feet of the film and inspect the images with a magnifier or loupe. Handle the film by the edges only, using clean cotton gloves. Never touch the image area - fingerprints leave permanent marks.