

# World War I Memories

By James Miller, MCPF, GCF



A shadowbox featuring a great-grandfather's service memorabilia shows a variety of special techniques that make object framing a true specialty

Of all the things that customers bring in to a framer, three-dimensional objects tend to be uniquely important in several ways:

- They usually have significant sentimental or personal value regardless of their monetary value. The owners often have emotional attachments to the people, events, or other memories represented by the objects. Their personal value routinely trumps their monetary and decorative value.
- In framing objects, a frame designer is also an artist involved in telling a story through the frame design. At the same time, more collaboration and communication with an owner is necessary to make sure the story is accurately told by the framing.
- Because of their emotional value, objects usually call for non-invasive, reversible attachment to the mounting board. Preservation framing principles dictate



One clear film strap, about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide, holds the whistle securely in place.

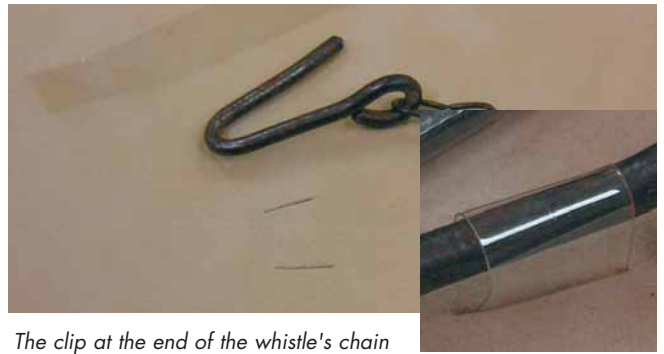
that items of value should remain unchanged by their mounting.

- Special mounting is typically more labor intensive than for two-dimensional framing, and objects usually require a more advanced knowledge of mounting methods and materials. The mounting should be inconspicuous, if not invisible, for a pleasing appearance. Mechanical support of the object is also important, which may create added mounting challenges. Framing three-dimensional objects often requires such out-of-the-ordinary items as deep-rabbit mouldings, acrylic boxes, or other such provisions. Nor is there any room for trial and error, which may result in failed mounts or damage to valued objects.

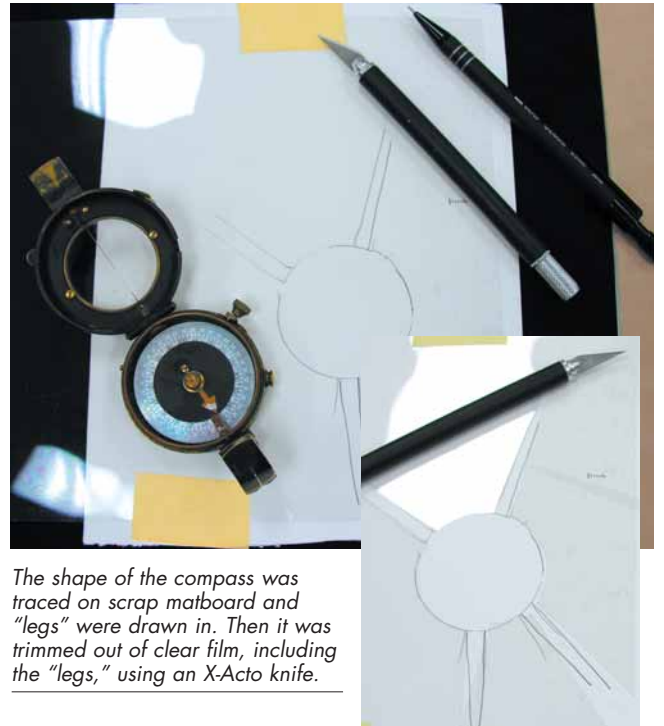
For all these reasons, the price for framing objects is nearly always higher than for two-dimensional projects, sometimes significantly higher. Some excellent two-dimensional framers are quite uncomfortable about framing objects. And that gives framers who study and practice object framing a real competitive advantage. They have relatively little competition, so they earn more on these higher ticket projects because customers who seek expert object framing are usually willing to pay a specialist's price to have their unique projects done right.

## World War I Memorabilia

The project shown here exemplifies all these aspects of object framing. The customer and her husband, who are well recognized and welcome in our store, wanted to have these items framed as a Christmas gift for their son, whose great-grandfather carried them in World War I. According to his mother, he has great interest in WWI and WWII history, so his appreciation for this gift would be exceptional. The only thing missing



The clip at the end of the whistle's chain is held by a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide clear film strap, threaded twice through the board to capture both sides of the bend. The chain is fastened in four spots by clear film straps.



The shape of the compass was traced on scrap matboard and "legs" were drawn in. Then it was trimmed out of clear film, including the "legs," using an X-Acto knife.

would have been a photograph of the great-grandfather in uniform, which might have added to the project's personal value. Unfortunately, none was available.

As a practical matter, the design was relatively simple. This group of items had a fortunate variety of colors and textures, so a visually pleasing presentation could be created with few decorative features that would have increased the size, depth, and price of the project. Instead, the focus was on unobtrusive, non-invasive, reversible mounting to preserve the items in their present condition.

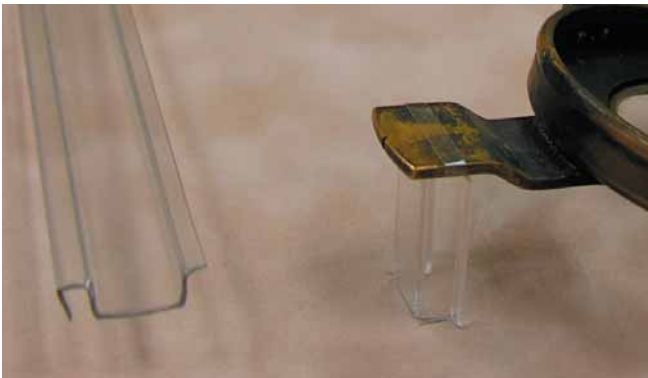
The cloth bag was the easiest item to mount, sewn to the mount board using cotton thread. The whistle, pocket knife, wrist identification band, and leather compass case were all mounted by straps made of Melinex 516 clear polyester film. The leather items were dried out and brittle, so their shapes could not be changed



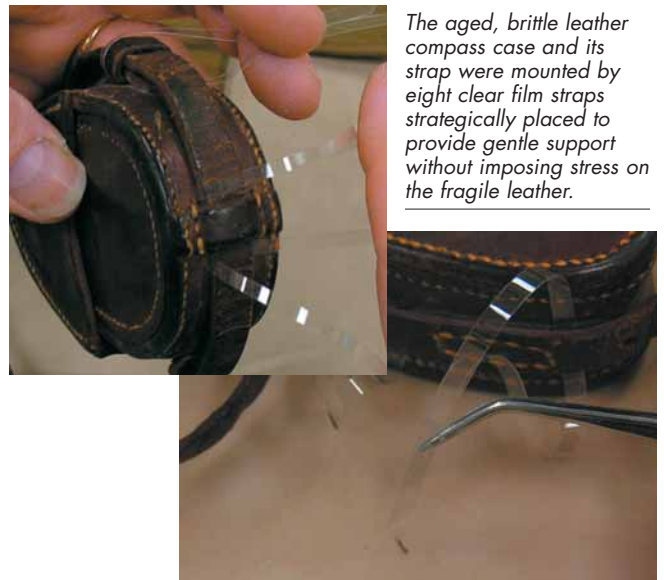
The scrap from the template was used to mark slot locations with light pencil lines on the mount board. Note that the slots are placed slightly inside the perimeter of the compass so they will be covered when the mount is completed. Then the mount "legs" were pulled through the slots.



After the compass was placed under its clear film mount, the legs were pulled snug and attached to the back of the mount board with double-sided polyester tape with a good quality acrylic adhesive, then burnished to activate the bond. Note that ATG would not be suitable for this kind of mount because it has no carrier and could flow.



The hinged lid of the compass was held by a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide clear film strap and supported by a specially trimmed piece of clear  $\frac{1}{2}$ " FrameSpace, about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long.



The aged, brittle leather compass case and its strap were mounted by eight clear film straps strategically placed to provide gentle support without imposing stress on the fragile leather.

without risking damage. A conservator might have helped make the leather more pliable, but the customer decided to leave it as is. So mounts were created to provide gentle, overall support. The leather strap of the compass case, for example, is mounted just as it was twisted and bunched in a storage box for more than 80 years.

The compass and buttons were also mounted with Melinex 516, but the coin/medal technique, in which the clear film is trimmed to fit the circular shape, is a bit more elaborate than a simple strap. The hinged lid of the compass was mounted in an open position using a support/spacer trimmed out of clear FrameSpace.

The shaving kit presented the greatest challenge, because all of the items in it were loose as well as aged

and fragile. First, the green cloth wrapper was sewn to the mount board by cotton thread. The razor head (upper left), its handle (right), and the brittle leather honing strop (bottom) were stitched in place by looping cotton thread over several strategic points on the items. There were half a dozen spare razor blades in the small black box. These were wrapped in clear film and placed in the box, which was slipped into its loop of the green cloth wrapper.

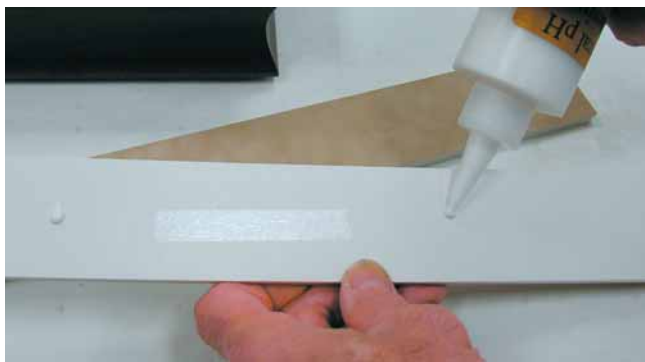
Finally, a thread laced through the blades' clear film wrap was used to hold them all together in the kit. The cotton thread used to hold all of these items in place was stitched through the green cloth wrapper and the suede background board before the Coroplast reinforcing board was added. Likewise, the clear film



Left: After the green cloth wrapper was sewn to the mount board, the brittle leather honing strip was fastened in its loop by two straps of cotton thread. Then the extra blades were wrapped in clear film, placed in their box, and secured by a strap of cotton thread laced through the clear film wrap.



Right: Finally, the razor and its handle were attached by straps of cotton thread. Clear film straps would have been more supportive for these metal parts, but there was no way to attach them through the green cloth wrapper. Sewing with thread was the next best alternative.



The glass is retained by shadowbox side panels, made by joining strips of matching suede board and 1/8" foamboard. The assembled panels are spot glued to the frame rabbet, with ATG spots used for a temporary hold while the glue dries. This technique allows disassembly and reassembly in case frame repair or glass replacement is necessary in the future.



This photo shows the back of the mount board, just before the Coroplast reinforcing board was added. The Coroplast board was attached to the back of the suede mount board with strips of polyester double-sided tape.

mounts were attached to the suede background board only. After all these mounts were done, a Coroplast reinforcing board was attached by numerous strips of double-sided tape.

The Museum Glass is nearly invisible. With 98 percent UV-filtering and anti-reflection optical coatings, it provides good protection from light damage and a clear view of the framed items. The glass is held in place by the shadowbox side-panels, made of suede board and 1/8" foamboard strips, which were spot glued in place for easy removal and replacement if that becomes necessary in the future. The fitting included a dustcover of lignin-free, acid-free Lineco blue paper, clear BumpOns, and a

<b>Size:</b>	29" x 19"
<b>Moulding:</b>	Artisan #930, 2" deep, walnut-finish shadowbox
<b>Glazing:</b>	Tru Vue Museum Glass
<b>Mounting board:</b>	Crescent Moccasin suede #C7183, reinforced by 4 mm white Coroplast.
<b>Mounting:</b>	Clear film straps, clear film coin/medal mounts, and hand-sewn cotton thread.

WallBuddies two-point hanging system.

This collection of antique, treasured memorabilia, rescued from deterioration in an old storage box, made a wonderful gift that was truly appreciated by its recipient. It is a beautiful heirloom in protective framing that can be enjoyed for generations to come. The customer's needs and preferences were satisfied, and the project earned a profit. ■

James Miller, MCPF, GCF, founded his framing business, ArtFrame, Inc., in suburban Columbus, OH, in 1988, where he specializes in the preservation framing of art, heirlooms, and three-dimensional objects. He is also an accomplished calligrapher. Miller, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, has served as chairman of the PPFA Certification Board, where he helped develop the MCPF exam, and has been chairman of the FACTS Education Committee. He also teaches at numerous industry venues and writes regularly for PFM.

