Lisa Bentley
April 7, 2010

As a volunteer for Millard's Crossing, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn how to properly use the computer software Past Perfect. My project for Millard's Crossing was to organize and file items received from Lera Millard and her family, and to manage these items using Past Perfect computer software. In order to be properly recorded, each item needed to be scanned, recorded, and filed into acid free folders and boxes. After more than twenty hours on this project, I felt I had only made a "good start" for what will surely be a long and tedious process.

My first day on the project was spent sorting through boxes of random items dating from the late 1800s to as recent as 1993. A large majority of the items were newspaper articles collected by Lera Millard during her lifetime. Also, there were letters and correspondence from friends and relatives. One of the most interesting things was a scarf commissioned to raise money for NASA after the shuttle explosion. It featured 52 signatures from the astronauts from Apollo I. The boxes were organized by years and significant events in the Millard family, such as their move to Washington and her years as a senator. Everyone in the Millard's Crossing group actively participated in the sorting of several hundred items therefore, we were ready to begin the process of entering each items into Past Perfect by the beginning of March.

When we began entering items into Past Perfect, I teamed up with Samantha in order to streamline the process and make it go much faster. Samantha and I met with Dr. Beisel in order to install the software and to have her walk us through the process of properly entering items into the system. She outlined the proper steps and made a

reference chart for us to refer back to. Samantha and I spent an addition three days working following the steps outlined by Dr. Beisel.

The first step to processing an item was to select an item from the pile of materials and determine what year it would best be cataloged under. This was often decided by a date on the article or letter. However, sometimes we had to estimate the year according to the contents of the writing. Most items were fit into the 2010.10 (Millard's years in Nacogdoches) or 2010.8 (Millard's years in Washington and Houston) categories. These categories were popular due to the mass amounts of correspondence Lera Millard received during and after her term in office.

After determining the item to accession, we entered information about the item into the archive, object, or photograph category (whichever it best fit). This might be the title of the article or subject, and sometimes the "to and from" of a letter received by Lera Millard. We mostly cataloged newspaper articles and letters into archives section of the Past Perfect system. We did record several photographs including an entire album of pictures from Mr. Millard's years in Washington. Photographs were easier to add to the system because they required less information. Yet, they took a lot longer to scan than other items which made them a lot more time consuming.

Next, we scanned the item into the computer and transferred it to the Past Perfect record it corresponded to. We scanned each item at 600ppi. This took several minutes per item, and proved to be the most time consuming part of the project. Additionally, the bed of the scanner was not large enough for some of the item; therefore, we had to choose a section at a time to scan. As a result, some items have several scanned images of the

same item. Ideally, we would have had a larger, faster scanner, however, for our purposes and maintaining our budget, the school scanner worked well.

The final step in this process was to file the item in an acid free folder with the accession number that corresponds to the item in the computer. We created individual boxes for each of the twelve divisions established for the project, and filed individual items into acid free folders within these boxes. Most boxes had at least a few items filed within them before we ran out of time. The folders were numbered according to the collection the item belonged in (which was 2010 for all items received from Millard's Crossing to date), then the number for the category in which the item belonged (which was a number 1-12 according to event and year), and, finally, the number of the item found. Each accession number is unique to the item in the computer system. For example, 2010.08.1 would be the first item accessioned in the 8th category of the 2010 collection.

The experience of working with the Millard's Crossing collection helped me to become more experienced in the art of museum management. The valuable skill of being familiar with Past Perfect will undoubtedly make me more marketable in the profession. Being able to have the hands on experience of working with collections provides budding archivists with the confidence to accomplish the varying tasks that will be required of them as collection managers and archivists.

Collections Management - Spring 2010

Name:	Lisa Bentley				Location:	Millard's Crossing	
Date	Time In	Time Out	Bug Count	Temp.	Humidity	Activity	Signed Off
3/10	1:00	4:45				Sorting Paperwork into A-H files	
3/9	9:00	12:30				Learn to use Past Perfect Software	
3/27	10:00	3:30				Entered items into PastPerfect	
4/1	9:00	12:00				Entered items into Past Perfect	
3/26	9:00	2:00				Entered items into PastPerfect	

20 hrs 45 min

Lisa Bentley

Collections Management

Dr. Perky Beisel/ Spring 2010

<u>Millard's Crossing Summary of Work Accomplished</u>

1. Sorted memorabilia from the Lera Millard Collection.

2. Identified categories for individual items and put in folders in acid free boxes.

3. Entered individual items into the organizing system PastPerfect.

4. Scanned individual items and attached digital image to PastPerfect file.