

A hopeful tradition

She opens the lid delicately, admiring the craftsmanship of the chest. The hinges are a brassy color, the dark cedar nice and glossy. She starts pulling out everything in it; the yellowed pages of recipes from before her time, the crinkled and torn photographs, the delicate china. This is her hope chest, symbolic of her family's lineage and hope for her future.

Hope chests, in the eyes of most people, are a thing of the past. They're just trunks that decorate a room, just chests for quilts or plates. The chests no longer hold the same significance they held when they contained one's dowry and most prized possessions.

The [hope chest](#) has stood as an important piece in many cultures, from Egyptian to Amish. Hope chests were used to store a young woman's belongings needed to start her own life and marriage. Although the tradition is usually between women, some young men have hope chests, as well. Hope chests were traditionally used for marriage, but have shifted to fit the times throughout history. Nowadays, hope chests hold items for college and life in general; not just traditional marriage and family items.

“

“What they hold is meaning. They stand for the future, a trunk of opportunity in my eyes. I look forward to filling mine with useful and memorable objects for my future.”

– Cameron Murry

My hope chest is a Lane chest made of dark wood that sits at the foot of my bed, and often doubles as a seat or shelf for my backpack. I received the trunk from my aunt for my sixteenth birthday. It was the first piece of furniture she

and her husband had purchased together. With that being said, its significance in my life is already evident.

When I first got the chest, I had no idea what to fill it with. It was mainly used to hold papers from school or things that didn't really have a place. Now, it holds symbolic items that I couldn't bear to part with. Inside my hope chest are dishes, kitchen utensils, picture frames, sewing kits, needlepoint, knick knacks for decorating my future home and items of utmost importance.

Someday, the sturdy trunk will be filled to the brim with items of significance to not only myself, but my family as well. It will hold quilts, linens, photo albums, recipe books, wedding china, baby shoes and memorabilia from all my life's future accomplishments and milestones.

In my future home, it's going to be seen. It's going to be sat upon and worn a little from frequent use. It's going to be a place for blankets to lay upon, just as warm and welcoming as the items it holds. I'm excited for the day it will see a new home, a new place to stay.

It's not just a beautiful trunk, it's preparation for the future. Buying dishes and household items now, as a teenager, is saving me money in the long run. Asking the adults in my life what kind of things are worth buying is a great experience. It gives me a chance to bond with each and every one of them, bringing me a little closer to the adults in my life before I go off to college.

I plan on carrying out this tradition and passing my hope chest down to my children someday. But for now, I'll just enjoy filling it with all of the special things in my life.