

## PRESENT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

By Xenia Stanford

During break: Timed auto PowerPoint presentation of "Memories of Gertie"  
©Xenia Stanford – next time I would set to music. PPT can also be set to do an automated talk with slides. This is one way to present Your Family History!

### REASONS

- Don't you wish your ancestors had done so?
- Aren't you happy to find any tidbits they might have left?
- Do you want your descendants to be able to know their family history?
- Do you want your hard work, time and even money not go to waste?
- It's fun and I've heard it's therapeutic!

### FORMAL GENEALOGICAL REPORTS

#### Descendant Numbered

- *New England Historical and Genealogical Society (NEHGS) Register System*
  - *National Genealogical Society Quarterly (NGSQ) Record System*
- N.B.** Descendants of ...

#### Ancestor Numbered

- *Sosa-Stradonitz System (Ahnentafel System)*
  - *Multi-Surname System*
- N.B.** Ancestors of ...

#### **THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER SYSTEM**

*Sample as per Chinook © Brian Hutchison*

#### **NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY RECORD SYSTEM**

*Sample as per Chinook © Brian Hutchison*

### NEGHS REGISTER VS NGSQ RECORD

#### Register

- Uses Roman numerals, but Arabic only if children have offspring carried forward in the report
- Ancestor's names are highlighted in bold and small caps

- Abbreviations amid life-event (e.g. b. for born)

### **Record**

- Uses both Roman and Arabic no. for children whether have offspring or not; uses plus sign for those who carry forward
- Names highlighted in bold with only initial capitals
- Full-text for life-events, BMD in full

### ***SOSA-STRADONITZ SYSTEM MULTI-SURNAME SYSTEM***

(Thru Chart Example)

***Sample as per Chinook © Brian Hutchison***

Then I showed samples of the following:

### **PEDIGREE CHARTS FAN CHART BOWTIE CHART**

See some of these and others at <http://www.misbach.org/pdfcharts/>

Charts are great ways to show your family tree in a more visual way. It helps to add charts to formal report formats or narratives. Just make sure anyone on the chart that is published whether on the web or in a book is deceased or has given their permission.

### **BOOKS**

I talked about books I like:

*From Sailing Ships to Spitfires* by Shirley Walker, which I like because she writes a free-form narrative, but backs up her story with facts and sources.

*What Lies Behind the Picture* by Vernon Wishart, who writes about how he found he had Cree ancestry and again gives sources to back up his claims.

### **BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

*Stream of Memory* by M. Laurel Buck (who lives in Calgary, is an author and speaker). She writes about her personal experiences growing up in Verdun, Quebec in her book *Roots Beneath the Pavement*. She has written other books about moving with her minister husband to Alberta and her visits to Ireland where her family originated. She also writes about her experiences discovering her Irish roots and her first-hand experiences there.

*The Gieck Family in Canada* by Donna May Gieck McKinnon, whose book I like because the first part is written as a narrative, which she follows in the second half by the formal genealogical report. Just before the genealogical report, she explains it. This is what I have encountered as a professional genealogist. I have to give my clients the formal report with facts and sources so they know where I found the evidence and who begat whom, but I have to explain to them how to interpret the report!

*A Gift of Grace: A Mother's Journey Through Her Son's Schizophrenia* by Bea Weatherly is one of the many books I have helped people write about their lives. Again she writes about what she experienced, but there were facts we had to check, e.g. accurate names of organizations. All names were changed even though this is a factual account, but most of the people named in the book are still living.

## MY BOOKS

Currently I am writing a book called *Pigtail Times at Taimi: True Tales from My One-Room School*. I am writing what I know or rather what I remember. I have changed everyone's names but my own because other family members are alive and remember it differently. This will happen but it is my story written for children and hopefully adults who remember one-room schools as students or teachers.

Since childhood I have been writing a book about my paternal grandmother who was generous to a fault. She took in stray dogs, cats and children, including me. The book is called *More in the House* and the delay is because I am researching the historical context/social history so it truly will reflect the life of a reluctant pioneer woman who, though not famous, helped form the backbone of this province.

I am also working on a book about Maurice Patrick Shea (1794-1892 – he lived almost 98 years) *The Last British Survivor of the Battle of Waterloo*. We know this because he was the last person who had served in that battle and was still on pension from the British Army. I asked for anyone with information on the battle and social/military history of the time to share information with me. One woman after the talk asked me if there are any online sources with the names of those who served in that battle because she has an ancestor who fought in that battle.

Here is one

<http://www.archive.org/stream/waterloorollcall00daltuoft>

Writing a book about your life, first person (autobiography), is considered primary evidence as long as you do not exaggerate or falsify like the author of *A Million Pieces* did. Researching a different era from that in which you lived or of a person whom you did not know personally (biography) makes it secondary evidence. We need to know how you know what you did not live.

### **WHAT NOT TO DO!**

A book I question is *The French Quarter* by Ron Graham. At first it resonated with me because the first half dealt with learning he was  $\frac{3}{4}$  Scot with  $\frac{1}{4}$  French Canadian. The French Quarter was the never talked about part of his ancestry. It was represented by the grandfather who talked with a funny accent and was only allowed to enter through the back door like the servants or delivery people, not the front door like other family members and guests. The second part is written in the narrative form about all the ancestors in his family tree. He does not show their connection to him nor does he offer any sources for what he claimed happened. He didn't live then, so how could he know what happened? Reviews claimed his book was well-researched, but how would we know when he doesn't give facts and their sources?

Please don't do this to your heirs. They would like to know "how can you prove it." They want to know what is true. So present your family history as fact or call your book a historical novel and not family history.

### **DIARIES & LETTERS**

The most famous diary of all is probably the *Diary of Anne Frank*. Any of us who have been left with diaries and letters from our ancestors or family members are fortunate. I am lucky to have the diary of a great aunt who starts it off in Ukraine and continues it during her life in Canada. It is an eye-opener giving the firsthand experiences we would not otherwise know. Also I have letters from family members in Europe written to the Canadian family and letters from my "real mother" (the aunt who raised me) that give me a greater understanding of her character. She wasn't one to talk about feelings, but her letters are more revealing!

The July issue of *Chinook* will cover, either as a review of or an excerpt from, *Letters from Lila*, a book based on letters from another Prairie pioneer.

Writing or keeping letters as well as diaries or journals helps preserve and present our family history.

## USING TABLES TO KEEP TRACK

I showed the first part of a table in Word done by Ann Williams to record and present the information on many members of her family who were in the military. I use a similar technique to keep track of the events in the life of Maurice Patrick Shea and his descendants. I can then sort by date or name. It all depends upon how you set up the table and it can be used as a way to present this information to other family members now and later.

## THE INTERNET & ONLINE FAMILY TREES

I talked about the many online means of sharing family information:

- Everywhere and anything but not always assure privacy, accuracy and sources (useful as clues, but shouldn't be accepted as fact without verification).
- World Family Tree – submitter gives for free and those who want it pay! (It is also hard to remove information if a relative provides details on living people. WFT does not check and does not accept any liability. I wonder though if they could be sued under the Privacy Act.) Again, the information needs to be verified through primary evidence.
- My Family – too complicated. I tried this to share with the Stanford family the many details of the nearly 6 figure number of ancestors and relatives. This way I would not have to send pdf attachments via email and it would be there for new people as they join the list of those family members who want to receive updates. Of about a dozen people only two were able to get in and find the information. Some didn't bother and others who tried multiple times told me it was too complicated.
- Dynastree – anyone you invite can change data. I learned about this site from a colleague I have known for a long time. She has been doing her Polish/Ukrainian research for only a year or two but she has set up her family tree with photos of nearly every person on the website Moikrewni (My Cousins) and has a photo gallery to share pictures with those whom she invites. Dynastree is the English version but it forces you to start with yourself. If I am sharing information with my children's father's side, I do not necessarily want to share information on my ancestry. Also I do not want to openly share data on living people. Dynastree asks you to start with yourself, so I chose a deceased person (no alerts that this person shows as having died, but here I am claiming to be her) Alice Shea who married Joseph Stanford II. I now receive email to Mrs. Shea. I thought I would be addressed as Mrs. Stanford, but not as Mrs. Shea. Even if I were Alice Shea, I would be Mrs. Stanford using the English convention of taking

a husband's surname at marriage – at least it was so in those days.  
Pro: unlike My Family, it is free. My Family comes with a few weeks or a month trial period and then you have to pay to continue to use.

So I came to the conclusion that there is no secure, easy-to-use website to share family information. If someone has found otherwise, please let me know.

## **SCRAPBOOKS**

Scrapbooking is something I have been doing for as long as I can remember because it was something done by the women in our family. We made scrapbooks for weddings, births and funerals. I made scrapbooks of special events, like a road trip I took with three friends. I took photos and wrote up the story of our adventures. I made a copy for each of us. I did the same for Christmas parties at work. We knew nothing about archival materials and yet some of the old scrapbooks remain intact.

Men or non-scrapbookers may wonder why do this at all. Why not just stick the photos in an archival photo album and label who is who? The answer, at least for me and I know for many others, is scrapbooking an art form. All you had to do was look at the scrapbooks in the display at the break to see how much work goes into creating this art. I teach many different techniques to use in scrapbooking and offer workshops where you can learn the techniques and use my many tools.

Don't forget that labelling and journaling are as important in scrapbooking as are the photos. I'm sure you have had the frustration of looking at a photograph from the past and not knowing who the people are and what the occasion or location was. If you are going archival to present the "present" (current) to the future, there is no point if 100 years from now, the family sees the photo but has no idea what the photo represents.

## **THINK OUTSIDE THE BOOK**

Today many people are turning to creative ways to share family history or family news in non-traditional "scrapbooks." I demonstrated a page from a CD jewel case scrapbook I created for a friend. It would only hold a few pages but I created a pocket to hold the CD that had a detailed family

history she could print out or read on her computer screen. Some are doing scrapbooks in boxes, tins, paper bags and all sorts of materials. A friend of mine sewed scrapbooks for her grandchildren. "Oh horrors!" some of you may say since these are not all archival materials. The purpose though is to get family interested in their history through these fun means now. We can still have our archival versions for posterity.

## **CREATE INVITING DISPLAYS**

In the interests of engaging family members in their history (especially young people) create an inviting display whether it is a box of family booklets containing handed-down recipes, journals or photo albums and leave them where family members will see them every day. Eventually they will ask questions and then you can share the stories. Sharing stories about life in the "old days" is the earliest way to present family history. Oral history is an excellent way to pass down stories from you or even from what you were told by or about your ancestors. A tattered embroidery done by a family "war hero" (I learned from a military historian that this was what injured soldiers were taught to do while convalescing) hangs on my dining-room wall. My children say they have heard the story of this cloth and the person behind it 100 times. Maybe the 101<sup>st</sup> time will be enough for them to remember the story and pass it on to their children!

## **DIGITAL SCRAPBOOKS**

In just one web search I came upon this site that lists websites with journals for asking questions to ensure family history is recorded:

### **Top 10 Memory Books - Journals with Questions for Preserving Family Memories**

By Kimberly Powell, About.com

[http://genealogy.about.com/od/journaling/tp/legacy\\_journals.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/journaling/tp/legacy_journals.htm)

1. To Our Children's Children: Journal of Family Memories
2. Your Story: A Guided Interview Through Your Personal & Family History
3. The Story of a Lifetime: A Keepsake of Personal Memoirs
4. Memories for My Grandchild
5. The Book of Myself: A Do-It-Yourself Autobiography in 201 Questions
6. Grandmother Remembers: A Written Heirloom for my Grandchild
7. Grandfather Remembers: Memories for my Grandchild
8. A Father's Journal: Memories for my Child
9. For My Child: A Mother's Keepsake Journal

## 10. Christmas Memories: A Keepsake Book from the Heart of the Home

These are all ways to record personal and family history digitally and present later. The narrative can be accompanied by photos. It is easier said than done! As one person said to me she sent a copy of the book *Once Upon a Lifetime* to her mother to fill out. That was several years ago and still no results. This person also bought a copy of the PC version but hasn't used it yet herself. I think one way to get this done is to sit down and ask the person the questions and record the answers as you go. There are too many distractions in life that many would never get "a-round-to-it" as the sign goes. Sitting together and filling it out not only gets the job done but you hear it and share in the story time. Try it and get back to me.

### **MY CANVAS**

See [mycanvas.com](http://mycanvas.com)

### **HERITAGE MAKERS**

See [heritagemakers.com](http://heritagemakers.com)

The above two are systems where you create a digital scrapbook and then it can be printed in as many copies as needed. You pay the bucks but it overcomes the time it takes to do the cutting and pasting of a single physical scrapbook from scratch and making more than one of each of those is a challenge. You can sign up for a trial at My Canvas and they do not charge you until you are ready to print it. You can also let others view it and add photos. . I can help you with My Canvas, if that is your choice and you don't have the time to scan, upload and place your photos. Bev Rees is a consultant for Heritage Makers and offers scanning services as well. Many were admiring her books during break.

The next slide showed different options available from Heritage Makers to share your family history.

### **MAKE A GAME OF IT!**

Ken and Bev Rees made a deck of cards with family photos on the back and the regular card face on the front. They used an option in Heritage Makers to do this. Another idea is the one I used for a family reunion where there was a book showing the family tree. I made a deck of cards that were to be used in pairs. One set had an event or action by a person in the family tree and the other gave the person name and a photo. It was hard to match because most people had only flipped through the book. If there was a tree on a wall

or if I had shared the stories first and played the game later, it would have been more successful than just two pairs being able to match cards in the time allotted.

Make it a game and fun, but set it up for success!

**BOOKMARK FROM LEGACY  
NAME TAG FROM LEGACY  
CALENDAR FROM LEGACY**

Marion Peterson made a horizontal and a vertical bookmark using Legacy 7. She also created a name tag for herself with a photo and family tree (parents and grandparents). She hopes to do one for everyone at their family reunion this summer. She also made a calendar with photos on each page. She shares the April page of her calendar in the April *Chinook*. Her bookmarks and name tag are also in the April *Chinook*.

**VIDEOS**

There are many advantages to presenting family history through videos. We can hear the people speak and see them move. Here are ways to create those videos:

- Home movies
- Professional Videography
- News!
- You Tube or UTube
- Movies

These are all great ways to share your family history. Heather Jaremko showed some of hers at the display as well as sharing her two amazing quilts. How did you get photos of everyone and how long did this take?

**OTHER**

Speaking of quilts, Mertie also showed one of hers and two of her books she made for each person in the family with coloured photos and written descriptions and stories. Each family unit had one page in the book for colour photos of everyone and a write-up for each family. In addition, the beginning section was on the common ancestors.

Another unique project is the one by Estelle Goble where she created a village like the one where she grew up: Thorhild, Alberta. I was able to interview this delightful 83 year-young woman and write a story published in the April *Chinook* complete with photos she supplied to me. They are ones not on her site, but you can see more photos, read her stories and leave a message in her guest book at [www.babasmemories.com](http://www.babasmemories.com)

### **THE END BY NO MEANS**

This by no means is the end of the ways you can Present Your Family History for the next generations to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

### **How are you going to Present Your Family History?**

During question period, a member shared with us that she still had her autograph books that were popular back in the day! I have one around that I saved too. It is in a trunk at the back of the under stairs storage room, but it is neat to be able to go back and read what your friends, teachers and others wrote in it. It brings back the memories, gives you an opportunity to show it to your family and talk about the people who wrote in the autograph book. Where are they now? What are they doing? It is just one more way to make sure your story carries on long after you. An autograph book reveals as much about the person whose book it was as those who wrote in it.

If you have an autograph book and are willing to share it, please send scans of the pages to me. I have wanted to do a book about these autograph books and share some of the verses, handwriting and drawings in them. We can keep the names of the contributors anonymous.

Have you a unique way of presenting your family history? We still want to see what you are doing to preserve and present your family history not just on the pages of books, but also in the minds of your family. If so, send a write-up explaining your project and include photos by email to [editor-chinook@afhs.ab.ca](mailto:editor-chinook@afhs.ab.ca)