

Outside the Frame: Telling the Full Story of Your Photographs

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Photo clues aren't restricted to the images themselves. Telling the story of your pictures involves looking at the evidence in the picture itself and then finding the documentation both within your family history and in outside sources.

Whether you know who's in a photo or it's a completely unidentified image, there is a story to be told. Study the clues, look for background information, and pick a format.

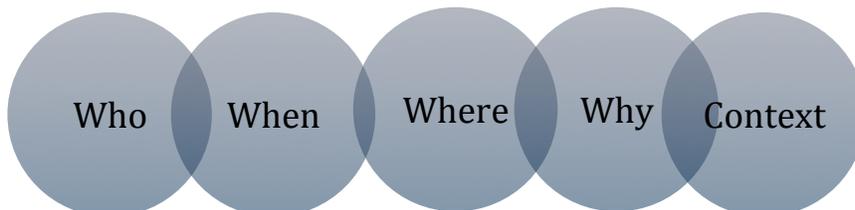
Part One: Pick a Photo and a Story

Photo Stories to Tell

- The story of one photo/one person
- The story of an event through a group of photos
- Your ancestor's immigration journey adding traveling conditions, a passenger list, a photograph of the ship and a map tracing their route.
- An ancestor portrayed with pictures, their favorite sayings, images of things they owned or made, and an autograph.
- Weddings in the family complete with pictures, wedding history and clippings.
- Use photos to tell the story of your life.

Part Two: Research

Start with the Photo Clues



Establish a Time Frame by Examining the Following:

- Type of Photo

- Photographer Work Dates
- Clothing and Prop Clues

Look Outside the Picture

- What does the style of picture say about your ancestor?
- Are they fashionable or conservative?
- Why did they pose for this particular image?

Part Three: Write and Create

Three basic steps. Repeat as Needed.

Research

- What Do We Know?
- What Don't We Know?
- How Do We Find Out?

Write

- Develop a routine. The same time every day or every week. Find your spot.
- Outline. It means different things to different people.
- Rough draft. Don't worry about making it perfect first time around.
- Create a character sketch for the people you're writing about. List what you know about them. Their personalities can add color to your sketch.
- Remember the five senses. Include details to make it a richer and more real portrayal.

Edit

- Edit yourself.
- Read aloud.
- Use a grammar editor like Grammerly or Hemingway.
- Change the font size.
- Find another reader because your mind will see what it wants to.

Important Considerations

- Select Good Quality Visuals
- Verify Your Family Research
- Cite Your Sources
- Be Creative

Resources

Garner, Bryan A. *The Chicago Guide to Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Gerth, Sandra. *Show, Don't Tell*. (Kindle edition)

Kramer, Mark and Wendy Call. *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writer's Guide* (New York, New York: Plume Books, 2007).

Kercheval, Jesse Lee. *Building Fiction: How to Develop Plot and Structure* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1997).

Ledoux, Denis. *The Photo Scribe: A Writing Guide: How to Write the Stories Behind Your Photographs*. (Lisbon Falls, Maine: Soleil Press, 1998).

Levine, Gail Carson. *Writing Magic: Creating Stories That Fly* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

Metcalf, Linda Trichter and Tobin Simon. *Writing the Mind Alive: The Proprioceptive Method for Finding Your Authentic Voice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002).

Rohrbach, Bill. *Writing Life Stories* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2008)

Grammarly.com

Hemingway.com

The Interview : If the Person in the Picture is Still Living

Listen first: StoryCorps

<https://storycorps.org/>

- All it takes to document the history in your family is a recording device, a list of questions and a willing participant.
- Develop a set of questions based on what you'd like to know. Start the interview with some basics such as the person stating their name and their particulars—age, date of birth, parents and places they've lived and worked.
- Use prompts such as objects or photographs of people and places to encourage spontaneous stories.

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