

# Past Forward: Tech Tools & Strategies for Sharing Family History Through a Consumable Genealogy Plan

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## **Overview:**

The preferred communication methods of the emerging generation are founded upon brevity, shareability, visual elements, and catchy stories. Is your family history packaged in such a way that will grab their attention and foster retention to link with the generations beyond? It's time to look up from the citation maze to build a consumable genealogy plan for sharing beyond the pedigree.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Communication Methods:**

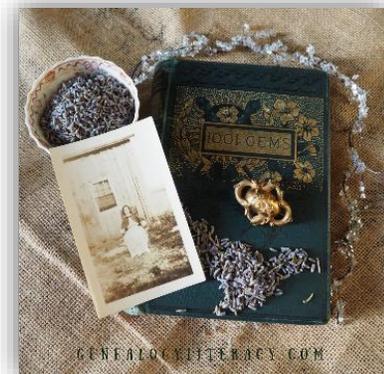
In the 21st century we communicate in very different ways. We rarely write letters, relying on technology tools to communicate: e-mail, social media, video, websites, texting. With these tech tools, we aim for brief messages that can be shared or recycled with one click. Our families are no different – most are connecting through tools that deliver brief snippets of information. Accessing genealogy information is especially challenging. Existing on a bridge between online information and the physicality of print sources. Digital Literacy is no longer a luxury, but a requirement.



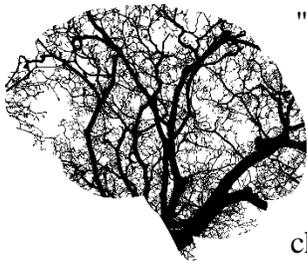
## **20<sup>th</sup> Century and Prior:**

How did we learn about and process stories in the past? | Captive audience? | Experiences at various locations? | Handling physical objects to tie us to the story? | Going through old photo albums? | Reading? | Memorable life moments? | Adventures?

Common denominator = Tangible, tactile encounters of the senses coupled with emotion and/or surprising facts helped us retain many of the stories.



## **Memories: How to Impress the Brain for Longer Retention**



"The brain is just a lazy piece of meat. The brain must be provided with something that it has never before processed to force it out of predictable perceptions." Dr. Gregory Berns, Neuroscientist

With the noise of information bombarding the populace, it is imperative to break through with information that is surprising, visual, emotionally charged, and contains an element of storytelling. We cannot always provide all of these elements at once, but by remembering these vital ingredients, you can create nuggets of consumable genealogy that encourage a higher rate of meaningful retention.

### **Consumable Genealogy:**

“Stories are just data with a soul.” Dr. Brené Brown, TEDx Houston 2010

Consumable Genealogy provides small spoonfuls of family history that delight the brain, and can be further shared and recycled within your family – across technology platforms, and which can be consumed, not just passed over or ignored. Stories do not have to be long in order to be retained. By utilizing a consumable content recipe that excites the brain, you can help family members retain the information as long-term memories, as well as foster sharing/engagement.

### **Consumable Genealogy-The Plan:**

1 Part Emotion/Nostalgia, 2 Parts Visual, + Dashes of Wow & Fun:

- Have Fun: Think of Social Media as beneficial tools to engage your family audience.
- Prioritize the Information Shared: Outside of the family history book you are already writing, what elements (stories/facts) are the most important that NEED to be passed on to future generations?
- Think Like a Marketing Pro: Brief, tugs at emotions, teaches something new, or presents the wow factor – going family viral!
- Remember Your Audience: Ages of social media users vary widely – Instagram younger, Facebook older, etc.
- Define your goal: Get them to take up the genealogy mantle, create cousin bait, celebrate an event, or just plant seeds of family history that have a good chance of being remembered to future generations?
- Think in Memes: Even just a funny quote or phrase, coupled with a photo, can break through and get them to share and remember.
- Do Not Underestimate the Power of Nostalgia: Feel free to use at will – especially during the Holidays!



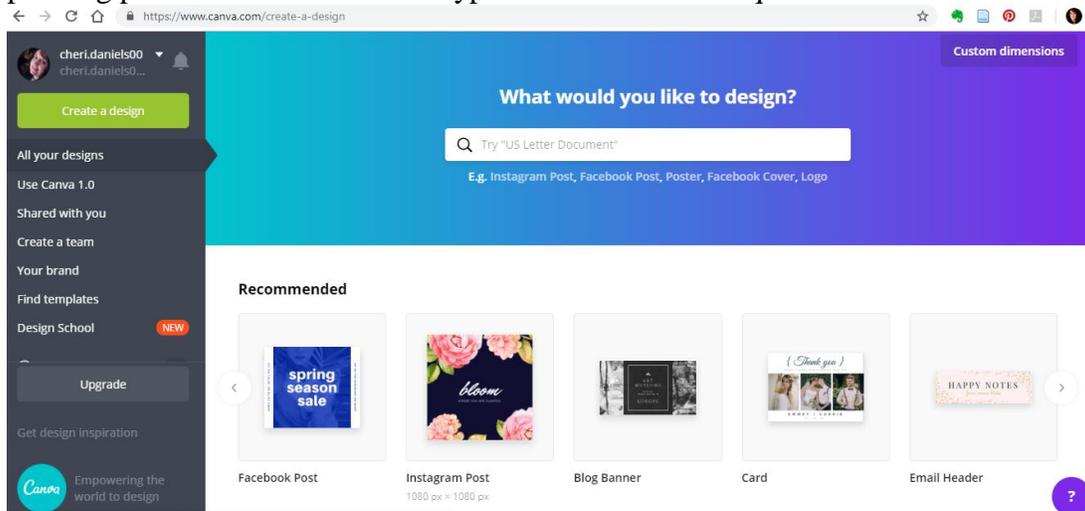
## Consumable Genealogy – The Tools:

Choose a favorite editing or content creation tool to produce small visual elements which can be posted alone or with stories included in the social media post. Be creative!

### *My Favorite: Canva*

<https://www.canva.com/>

Why? FREE – easy to use, and comes with pre-made template options that contain corresponding pixel counts for different types of social media requirements.

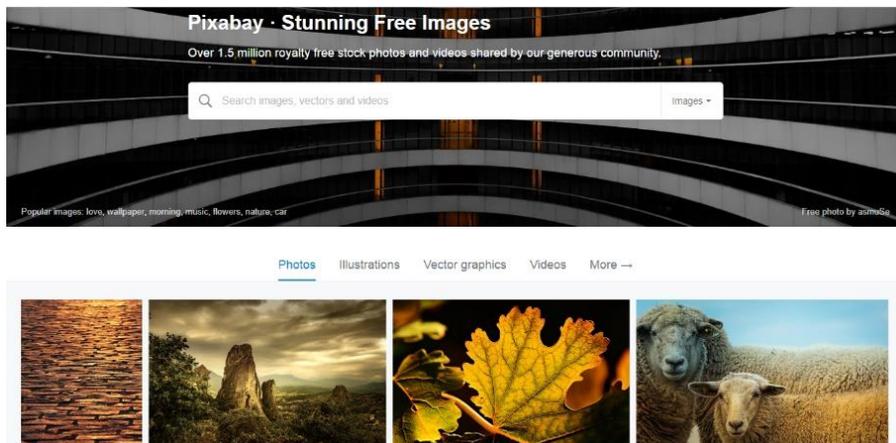


**Tip:** Pick a high enough resolution in a universal shape that can be shared across various types of social media platforms – create once, share multiple times to various audiences.

### *Supplemental Pick to be Used with Canva: Pixabay*

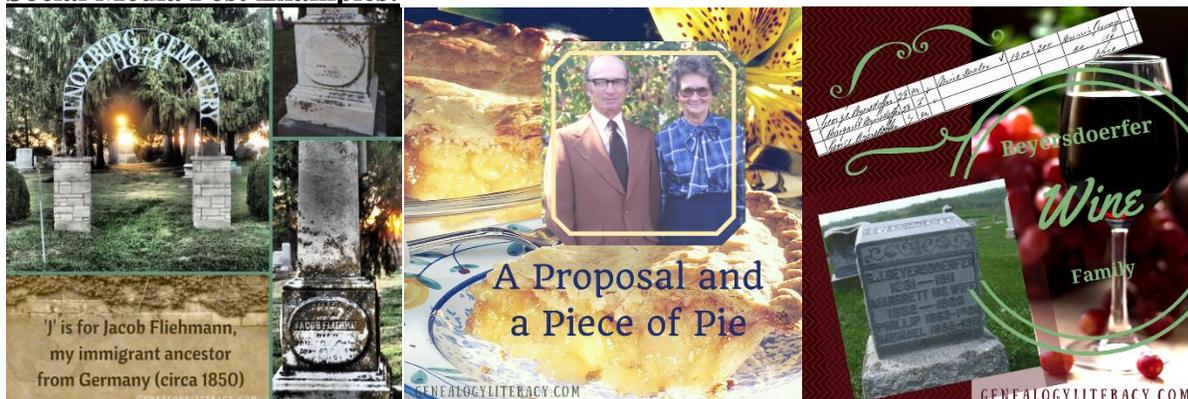
<https://pixabay.com>

Free, studio quality images that can provide beautiful backgrounds or graphics for your compositions created in Canva – even vector graphics which layer beautifully over your Canva creations.



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## Social Media Post Examples:



**Instagram Posts:** Featuring mashup images with brief stories ready to be typed below the image posts. \* Remember \* A short paragraph to provide a hook, teaching something new, and making them want to learn more. All of these can then be re-posted in Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.

**The Ancestor Infographic:** Can be used in Facebook, Twitter, Blog, or Pinterest (Also: the Ancestor Pinterest Board). Relates more of the story, with a few facts, but remains visually appealing, and easily sharable. You can get more creative with this one by including visual graphs, timelines, or stats for military service, immigration, longevity, DNA results, etc.

### Additional Tips:

- Manage your creation schedule by creating a calendar with national events that impacted your family as well as important family milestones or Holidays. Utilize project management and social media scheduling tools to streamline planning and posting.
- Create family hashtags to promote your themes and provide an opportunity for other family members to connect their posts – engagement is a bonus.
- Watermark posts and/or pictures for sharing anywhere, even in Find A Grave.
- Brand yourself: Even if you are not a business – brand with your preferred contact info, website, or social media handle.
- Link your content to an online tree for additional information = a great way to get them into the pedigree to learn more, and share more images or memories.
- Don't forget DNA tidbits to appeal to your sciency family members!

**The Death of Billy Watts**  
ACCIDENT OR MURDER?

**PERSONAL STATS**  
William "Billy" Watts was born circa 1852, in Tennessee. He was a tenant farmer for most of his life. In 1907, his life was abruptly cut short after a gun discharged in his Weakley County TN home, striking him in the head.

**NEWS OF HIS DEATH IN 1907**

**BLEW TOP OF HEAD OFF**  
Tennessee Farmer Accidently Kills Himself with Own Gun.

Dresden, Tenn., Feb. 11. — Bill Watts, a farmer, aged 60 years, was accidentally killed at home near Fancy, Tenn., eight miles northeast of here. He was taking shotgun from rack to go hunting, when hammer hung and gun was discharged, the load entering above right eye, literally blowing the top of his head off and scattering his brains over the ceiling. Deceased leaves a widow and several children.

**AFTER HIS DEATH**

- Wife, Sarah Ellen "Sally" Fuller Watts was born circa 1861, in Kentucky. Her own children accused her of planning Billy's murder with her lover, Clyde Chapman.
- Sally and Clyde were married in 1908 - one year after Billy's death.
- Were the children simply bitter over their Mother's remarriage so quickly after their Father's death, or did they have knowledge of an affair?
- Sally did not live very long after the marriage - she died in 1910.

**TO LEARN MORE**  
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