

Turning Genealogy into Family History: Creating Stories from Stats

Presented by Jean Wilcox Hibben – PhD, MA, CGsm
Riverside County, California
cell: 909-268-5326; text: 909-994-6114; jean@circlemending.org
<www.circlemending.org><http://circlemending.blogspot.com>



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Begin with the known, work to the unknown

Step 1

Start with interviews or information from relatives and those who knew your ancestors

Step 2

Gather information from all available sources

- Census records
- Wills
- Deeds
- Photos
- Vital Records
- Newspapers
- City Directories
- Regional Histories
- Military and Pension Files
- Maps
- Websites
- Family Ephemera and Artifacts
- Letters, Diaries, Journals
- Immigration and Naturalization Records
- Cemetery Records and Tombstones
- etc.

Step 3

Create a timeline using the information above and develop a storyboard (“chapters” of the ancestors’ lives)

Step 4

Identify historical information to put ancestors into a context for the geographic location

- Wars
- Epidemics
- Elections and Political Events
- Changes of Geographic Boundaries
- Territories Becoming States
- Religious Events
- Medical Advances

- Economic Conditions
- Weather Events
 - Blizzards
 - Hurricanes
 - Floods
 - Tornadoes
 - Draughts
 - Meteor Showers
- Disasters
 - Fires
 - Earthquakes
- Regional Events
 - Fairs, Expeditions, etc.
 - Openings of Businesses
 - Mass Migrations
 - Discoveries
 - Gold
 - Creation of Landmarks, etc.
 - Railroads
 - Canals
 - Harbors
- Etc.

Step 5

Combine the historical information with the ancestor's timeline to get a picture of the possible inter-relationship.

Step 6

Write out the combination of history and family data to show how your ancestor may have been affected by the various events.

Step 7

Combine/save the information:

- Put into keepsake books for family members
- Create narrative programs for family and community
- Add to the "notes" section in your genealogy program
 - Remember to clarify what is proven and what is speculation
- Use them to interest young folks in their (your) family history

Summary:

- **Identify the record(s) of a particular ancestor and time period**
- **Research the geographic area**
- **Put these in context with the family**
- **Put it all in context with history**
- **Link it all to the rest of the person's life**
- **Cite sources; identify info that has not been verified/substantiated**

References for Effective Storytelling and Validating Stories

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