INTRODUCTION

We have all collected family research, memorabilia and heirlooms over the years. But will our family want to continue collecting these items? Let's talk about how we might preserve and pass on these family treasures to future generations.

YOU HAVE BEEN THE KEEPER OF THE STORIES, THE MEMORIES, AND THE FAMILY TREASURES

NOW IT IS TIME TO LET GO

Don’t let your memorabilia and your heirlooms become a burden to you or to your family
You control the stuff… The stuff does not control you
Working on a family member’s possessions may bring up the emotion and the dynamic of the relationship
Let go of the past so that you can move on to your next chapter

THE PROCESS

Organize your research, memorabilia, and heirlooms
Discard or give away what you do not want
Preserve what you want to keep
Use your research, memorabilia, and heirlooms to create or curate a family legacy for your family and for your descendants
Share that legacy and that story with your family and the world

WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY LEGACY

Family papers, documents, recipes, photos, scrapbooks, home movies, audio tapes
Family research that you have done
Heirlooms…furniture, knickknacks, kitchen utensils, quilts, wedding dress, baptismal dress, military uniform, framed pictures, artwork, tools, jewelry, watches

START WITH YOUR PERSONAL FAMILY PAPERS

Letters, newspaper clippings, photos, diaries, journals, yearbooks, family Bible, ephemera

THEN ORGANIZE YOUR RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

Census, wills, deeds, maps, etc.
Keep your primary source (original) documents
Scan (or toss) your secondary materials (compiled)
Consider entering your research in an online data base
   Ancestry
   MyHeritage
   Family Search
   FindMyPast
And consider entering your research in a genealogy software
   Reunion
   Family Tree Maker
   RootsMagic
   Legacy Family Tree

GET RID OF…OR SCAN

Church and club newsletters
Cancelled checks, check registers, bank statements,
Newspaper and magazine clippings
Travel itineraries and brochures
Old calendars
Receipts
Medical bills and records
Insurance policies
ORGANIZE YOUR FAMILY PAPERS BY COUPLE, INDIVIDUAL, LOCATION, OR YEAR

HONOR THE PROVENANCE OF YOUR PAPERS

PROTECT YOUR PHYSICAL FAMILY PAPERS FROM LIGHT, HEAT, DUST AND BUGS

Preserve your material in archival boxes, folders, and plastic sleeves
Archival companies
  Gaylord
  Hollinger Metal Edge
  Archival Products
  Archival Methods

SHARE YOUR MEMORABILIA AND RESEARCH WITH YOUR FAMILY

Use online subscription sites
Create a flash drive of photos and information for your cousins
Self publish a book
Create a digital archive (Permanent.org, Forever.com, Collectionaire.com)

IF YOU DON’T HAVE FAMILY…
SHARE YOUR FAMILY’S STORY WITH THE WORLD

Local libraries
Local historical and genealogical societies
Family History Center (Salt Lake City)
Allen County Public Library (Fort Wayne, IN)
State Libraries and Archives
College or University special collections
Library of Congress

HEIRLOOMS

Furniture, jewelry, china, crystal, silver, pottery, clothes, artwork
Create three piles: Trash, transfer, keep
Marie Kondo advises us to keep what is useful and what brings us joy
DESCRIBE YOUR HEIRLOOMS

Take an inventory, create a spreadsheet
Put a picture, description, and story in an heirloom binder

WHERE DO YOU WANT YOUR RESEARCH AND HEIRLOOMS TO GO?

Create a family history and heirlooms directive (estate planning)
Put your instructions in writing
Share where you would like your research to go…to a person or to an institution
(A repository might be better able to handle your research if it is organized)
Have your heirlooms appraised. Avoid disputes over your heirlooms

WRITE UP A SUMMARY OF YOUR LEGACY

Briefly describe your collection/archive
Describe how and where your documents and papers are organized
Share how and where your original photos and digital prints are stored
Explain how your genealogy software works
Share where your computer files are backed up
Include the passwords to genealogy subscription sites and to backup sites
Explain how your heirloom binder or file works
Summarize and list the contents of your archival boxes

DON’T BE OVERWHELMED

Take it step by step
Start with an easy project
Remember whatever you do, will be better than when you started
Congratulate yourself on what you have accomplished
Remember you are doing this for your family, your descendants, your ancestors…and for yourself!

©2023 Katherine Nielsen