

PLANNING A FUTURE FOR YOUR FAMILY'S PAST

By Marian Burk Wood

Ancestors' photos, stories, documents, and heirlooms deserve to survive for years to come. As part of your family's past, they belong to your family's future! Learn how to: organize and store your family history collection; determine what is important to keep and what you can consider giving away; write a "genealogical will" to safeguard your collection's future; and share your family's history *now* -- before joining your ancestors.

The PASS process:

- 1. Prepare by organizing and analyzing materials (photos, letters, etc.)***
- 2. Allocate ownership (curate now to focus your collection)***
- 3. Set up written instructions (for the future of your collection)***
- 4. Share with heirs (generate interest in your family's past now)***

Step 1: Prepare by organizing and analyzing your materials

- Organize, store, protect photos/documents with these ideas:
 - archival sleeves for documents and photos
 - folders for documents and notes
 - binders for documents
 - archival boxes for photos, original papers, etc.
- Caption photos (label on sleeve, not on photo)
 - names, dates, places, relationships
- Inventory collection and uncover genealogical clues
- Digitize photos/documents over time, backup, share with family
- Document cousin connections

Step 2: Allocate ownership by curating your collection

- Not everything must remain in your possession
- Focus on items important to your family tree
- Sort collection into 3 categories: keep (yourself), keep (in immediate or extended family), and give away (outside the family)
- Consult with family about donating items to institutions (how-to process for donation)
- Plan for items related to ancestors who have no direct descendants

Step 3: Set Up written instructions to safeguard your collection

- Identify heirs to take possession of the collection in the future
- Ask permission to bequeath your collection
- Write down who gets what, and where the collection is located
- Anticipate potential problems and prepare possible solutions
- Make decisions about one-of-a-kind items with multiple heirs (consider sharing copies now, saving originals to bequeath in future)
- If no heirs, organize and label collection to be donated to suitable institution later (do your homework in advance)

Step 4: Share your knowledge of family history now

- Start now to get the next generation interested in ancestors and family stories
- Caption photos with names, relationships, places, etc. to keep ancestors alive
- Emphasize unique/dramatic aspects of the family's history and retell stories often
- Take younger generation on a visit (in person or virtually) to old neighborhoods
- Use photos, heirlooms, and stories as springboards to perpetuating family history
- Get your collection in shape to bequeath before you join your ancestors!

Please visit my genealogy blog:

<https://ClimbingMyFamilyTree.blogspot.com>

