

MADISON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 1031

Norfolk, Nebraska 68702-1031

VOLUME 17 - NUMBER 66

January, 1996

2nd QUARTER

ESTABLISHED JUNE, 1973

Meeting date and time - 3rd Tuesday of each month not including December
7:30 p.m. - First Baptist Church - 404 Benjamin Ave., Norfolk, NE.

OFFICERS: President - Lottie Klein V. President - Margerie Fuhrmann
Secretary - JaNelle Linnaus Treasurer - Donald & Dorothy Monson
Newsletter Editors - Joyce Borgelt and Jeanne Rix

DUES: Due September 1 of each year
\$6.00 for individual or \$8.00 per couple

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Last November the Madison County Genealogical Society enjoyed a slide program of England and Scotland. The slides were taken by Donald and Dorothy Monson while they traveled throughout part of the British Isles while visiting their son.

Our Society took a vacation the month of December and were busy with the many activities that take place during the Christmas season. On January 16th the members and their spouse will dine out at the Golden Corral for our annual Christmas party.

February's program will be "Preserving Old Photos and Newspaper Clippings," presented by Sandee Linde. In March we will have a travelogue of Ireland. At April's program we will hear a tape "Trailing Families; Westward Migration Patterns in Family History."

May the remainder of this winter season be pleasant and fulfilling for each of you.

Sincerely,

Lottie Klein

Lottie Klein

We extend our sympathy to Don and Dorothy Monson on the death of his father Elmer R. Monson, age 97.

We extend our congratulations to Jeanne Allison and Merle Rix who were married November 25, 1995.

Madison County Genealogical Society Membership List
January 16, 1996

Northern Antelope County Gen Society, P. O. Box 53, Orchard, NE 68764-0053		
Elizabeth J. Ahrens - 309 N. 13th Street, Norfolk, NE	68701	371-5029
Laura B. Allison - 1501 Girard Blvd, S. E., Albuquerque, NM 87106		266-1587
Wage Anderson - 106 Walnut Ave, Norfolk, NE	68701	371-9237
Joyce Barlow - P. O. Box 134, Osmond, NE	68765	748-3429
Mamie Bathke - 407 N. 13th Street, Norfolk, NE	68701	379-2056
Pearla A. Benjamin - 127 Maple Street, Wayne, NE	68787	375-4463
Joyce Borgelt - Rt. 1-Box 188, Battle Creek, NE	68715-9764	675-3665
Arlene Charboneau - 171 N. 18th, Springfield, OR	97477	746-5371
Edith Clark - 1700 Pasewalk, #206, Norfolk, NE	68701	379-5211
Margie Cooper - 620 North Sherman, North Platte, NE	69101	308-532-6098
Lois Craig - 1700 Prospect Apt 915, Norfolk, NE	68701-5659	371-0921
Bernice T. Dewey - 306 E. Prospect, Norfolk, NE	68701	371-0175
Marlene Edens - R. R. 1 - Box 264, Menomonie, WI	54751	
Anna Frautschi, 211 S. Helen St., P. O. Box 272, Valentine, NE 69201-0272		
Margerie R. Fuhrmann - 1215 Meadow Drive, Norfolk, NE		371-3805
Ruth E. Galitz - 314 S. 13th Place, Norfolk, NE	68701	371-0693
Doug Harbottle - 310 Cottonwood St., P. O. Box 1361 Norfolk, NE 68702-1361		379-0708
Celia M. (Ginger) Howser, 83578 551st Ave, Norfolk, NE	68701	379-4277
Betty Huebner - 1006 Meadow St., Watertown, WI	53094	
Lotti Klein - 1105 S. 10th, P. O. Box 122, Norfolk, NE		371-2508
Althea Larson - Box 1, Newman Grove, NE	68758	447-2744
JoNelle Linnaus - 2202 Elmers Lane, Norfolk, NE		379-2978
Harold J. Lyon - 604 So 14th Street, Norfolk, NE		371-2589
Donald and Dorothy Monson - 905 East S. Airport Rd, Norfolk, NE 68701		371-4270
Joan Moody - 503 No 10th Street, Norfolk, NE		371-3713
Elmer H. Nelson - 415 Prairie, Norfolk, NE		371-7779
Gilbert and Edna Nykodym - R. R. 4 - Box 210, Norfolk, NE		371-4357
Edward Otjen - 123 Shoshoni Trail, Applevalley, MN	55124	
Rev. Walter Pinnt - 411 Blaine, Norfolk, NE		371-8196
Bob Plisek - 810 Volkman Drive, Norfolk, NE		371-3468
Frances Praeuner - Rt. 1 - Box 30, Battle Creek, NE	68715-9705	675-1697
Jennifer J. Prange - 700 Mulder Drive., Lincoln, NE	68510-3942	
F. F. Preece - 246 Montair Dr., Danville, CA	94526	
Gerald W. Preece - P. O. Box 116, Battle Creek, NE	68715	675-2425
Ann R. Rape' - 3219 W 18th, Grand Island, NE	68803	
Jeanne Rix - 1625 West Berry Hill, Norfolk NE	68701-2412	371-2869
A. J. Scheerger - Box 805, Stanton, NE	68779	
Dee Sewell - 83742-552nd Ave., Norfolk, NE	687021-1212	371-0472
Leatta Stortvedt - 717 E. Norfolk Ave, Norfolk, NE		371-7343
Richard R. Streng - 807 S. 8th, Norfolk, NE		371-9216
Shirley Voeks - 219 Miller Ave, Norfolk, NE		371-9377
Mary Ann Voss - 721 E. Park, Norfolk, NE		371-3029
Susan Wattier - R. R. 1 - Box 225, Randolph, NE	68771	337-0138
Betty Weigert - R. R. 2 - Box 86, Wausa, NE	68786	586-2774
<i>John + Winifred Heintz - 505 N 28th St - Norfolk, NE 68701</i>		<i>379-0345</i>
HONARY MEMBERS		
Harlow Butcher - 1006 Logan Ave, Norfolk, NE		371-3897
Mary Carlisle - 1316 Prospect Ave., Norfolk, NE		371-1791

Heroic Rescue Made in Famous Blizzard of 1888

(Editor's Note—The following story was taken from an item submitted to us by Mrs. Alta M. Kierstead of Lincoln, who is a daughter of Samuel McKiver.)

Each year something new comes to light that has to do with the old, old story—the "Blizzard of 1888". A new hero, still unheralded, new forms of heroism which had passed by unnoticed are told. And after the manner of true heroism these deeds were done simply as a part of the routine of the life of the pioneer with no thought of self in them.

The story of how Samuel McKiver of Pierce County saved a life and a great deal of stock is told by his daughter, Mrs. Alta Kierstead of Lincoln. The McKivers lived on their farm (homestead) in the southwest corner of Pierce county, a half mile north of the Elkhorn river, (boundary line between Pierce and Madison county) and a mile west of the Antelope county line.

The storm struck at different times in various parts of the state. At the McKiver farm it was between ten and eleven o'clock as Mrs. Kierstead recalls it related by her parents and the pioneer neighbors. She relates:

My father was at the well (the old windlass type) drawing water for the stock, and my mother was with him when the storm struck. They had taken me down to a neighbor, a quarter of a mile distant and left me to play with their little girl, as it was very mild that morning. It was so warm outside that we little girls did not sit inside to play with our dolls as one would expect on mid-January days of pioneer times, but we played a sort of hide-and-seek game outside around the corners of the house—

My parents were suddenly alarmed at the roaring and whistling sounds of the wind. To the northwest they could see what had the

appearance of a great white sheet swooping down between two low ranges of hills through the draw known as Dutch Hollow. In a few minutes the storm was upon them—they were frightened and hurried across the neighbor's pasture to get me and by the time they arrived they had decided that they would have to get back home against the wind without trying to carry me, so I was left with my little friend while they turned their attention toward getting back to their stock.

My mother got a hot dinner ready, after which my father got on a horse, "Old Kate" and went out into the storm to try to round up his horses and cattle which he had turned out to graze on the open range. His horse floundered through the snow which was piling higher all the time. It was so fine and blinding that it was impossible to see which way they were going but it was as bad behind him so there seemed nothing to do but go on. After awhile he was startled by the sounds of screams—he guided his horse toward the direction from which they were coming and found himself by an old abandoned sod shanty from which the sounds came. He dismounted from his horse and forced the door of the shanty open, when he found a neighbor, Charles Rautenberg, inside in an exhausted condition. Mr. Rautenberg had been looking for his son, 10-year old Charley Rautenberg who was caught with his pony somewhere in the raging storm outside, and had stumbled into the shanty using what strength he had left to utter loud screams in the hope of attracting the child to the shanty.

Mr. McKiver did not take time to think of danger—there was need for immediate action and he took it.

As soon as Mr. McKiver heard Mr. Rautenbergs' story he immediately set out in search of the lost boy. He guided his horse along a row of corn (the field was close to the shanty) so that he could keep his directions, and thus be able to

find his way back to the shanty. Fighting his way against the stinging blasts of the snow in the bitter cold he kept close to the corn-row. After awhile he came upon a horse and a dog standing mute and motionless with their heads down in the storm. He dismounted and began to search for the rider of the horse. He soon found the little boy covered with snow lying directly under his faithful horse. As yet he was unharmed but it would have been only a short time until the child would have lost consciousness and frozen to death.

Mrs. Kierstead continues: "My father picked the little boy up from the drifts and placed him upon the horse, directing him to follow a long the corn row. The dog followed directly behind the horse of his master and after awhile they all got back to the shanty where they found Mr. Rautenberg waiting for them, anxiously.

Mr. McKiver then helped Mr. Rautenberg to get started, and together they fought their way through the storm to the Rautenberg home. The exposure from the cold and the great fright over the safety of his boy had so overcome Mr. Rautenberg that he had to crawl into the house and across the floor—he was sick afterwards. After that my father went home on old Kate, but he had to give up looking for the stock that night as it was growing so dark and the storm was raging so furiously."

The saving of the life of little Charley Rautenberg was the high-point of service which Mr. McKiver was able to perform during the storm but on the following day many colorful things added to the havoc of the storm's bitter attack. The loss of livestock was heavy throughout the state, but in this Mr. McKiver was enabled to do many helpful things for the surrounding territory in the care of stock. Mrs. Kierstead describes the next day's activities, as follows:

"The next morning it was clear and bitter cold. The snow was packed in hard frozen drifts that creaked under your feet when you walked. People were out trying to round up their stock. A great herd of whiteface cattle came from the Crystal Lake ranch in the northern part of Pierce county; they had drifted southward with the storm, and many of them did not stop until they struck the Elkhorn river to the south."

As Mrs. Kierstead describes this: her father was able to be of assistance in the preservation of the stock through a simple way—it only needed to be thought of. "Hard balls of ice were frozen over their eyes and icicles hung from their nostrils and snow was packed in to their hides. My father knocked the ice from their eyes and nostrils by the dozen. After the animals could see they had sense enough to find their way back to their own homes."

After Mr. McKiver administered this service to the cattle he continued to search for his own stock. While looking for his own herd he came upon a bunch of horses belonging to his neighbor, Dick Lee; they were huddled together in a gully, their eyes covered with balls of ice and their nostrils were stopped with ice. One by one he knocked the ice from their eyes and nostrils. "I can still remember them tearing past our house with their manes flying as they ran towards home, as my mother and I looked out the window. (My father had brought me home).

Battle Creek Enterprise
Battle Creek, NE 19 Dec
1968

Thursday, Jan. 8, 1948

Issue of Tilden Citizen

Mel Whitwer Tells About 1888 Blizzard

Local Man Writes Article
For Book Published On
Experiences In Great Storm

A book was published recently containing the various experiences of residents in this section of the country during the blizzard of 1888. The volume, entitled, "In All Its Fury", tells many vivid tales of the terrible snow storm 60 years ago on January 12th. An account given by Mel Whitwer and published in this book appears below.

"I was ten years old and was in school in district No. 34, two and a half miles west of Tilden, which was then called Burnett. We noticed the big black clouds as they first came up out of the northwest and I remember how awfully hard the wind blew, and how quickly it came.

"Our home was a mile northeast of the schoolhouse and when my father, Bernard Whitwer, saw it was going to be a bad blizzard he walked to school with what extra clothes he could carry for us children. He did not think it advis-

able to come with a team since the snow was blowing so badly. Miss Anna Colter was teacher then and had just come from New York state that fall, so my father knew she had had no experience with Nebraska blizzards. He came to the schoolhouse before time for dismissal and told Miss Colter to write on the blackboard that she and all the children were going to our house. Then he told us to get into our coats as soon as possible. It was then three o'clock and the storm was getting more severe.

"My father and the teacher started out in the lead and told us all to stay close together and follow as close as we could and not get separated from one another as a person could hardly see, on account of the blinding snow.

"When we got nearly to our house we met my uncle, Pete Whitwer, with a team and sled. He lived north of us and had come by to get my father to go with him to the schoolhouse. When he turned around to start back home the wind blew the box off the bobsled. But he and his children got home safely and all the rest of the school children stayed at our house that night and part of the next day.

"Most of the pupils were small and if the teacher had dismissed school as usual there is no doubt some of them would have been lost and frozen to death. We got plenty of frostbites as it was.

"Miss Colter often said afterward that she had no idea a storm could be so severe".

CHECKLIST FOR OBITUARIES

According to the American Family Records Association this list of items should be included in obituaries. They make obituaries more helpful to persons researching family records. They need not appear as listed but should be included.

1. Name of deceased, preferably full name (first, middle and last) and any *nicknames*.
2. Date of death by month and day, including year so when the clipping is cut from the newspaper the date is not lost.
3. Address of deceased's last place of residence. Places of previous residences.
4. Place of death, hospital, residence, highway, city or other identifiable location, state.
5. Place, date and time of funeral service. Name of minister, if any.
6. Visitation time and date, if held, and place.
7. Name of cemetery where deceased is to be buried, or other disposition of remains.
8. Date of birth, city, county, state, country (if different than where died).
9. Name of parents, including maiden name of mother.
10. Name of spouse (with maiden name if female).
11. Date and place of marriage if any.
12. Church and organizations of which deceased was a member and offices held.
13. Occupations of deceased and employer, if any, and offices held.
14. Survivors: Children, including name and place of residence, name of spouse; brothers and sisters, including place of residence, name of spouse. Parents, numbers of grandchildren (may be named).
15. Statement of those preceding deceased in death; include names of children, brothers and sisters.
16. Names of pallbearers.
17. Name of funeral home. In some cases, a classified advertisement is placed under "Deaths and Funerals", depending on newspaper.
18. Preference for memorial contributions in lieu of flowers if desired.

Editor's Note: The above list has been adapted from an article that appeared in the Chickasaw County Genealogical Society Newsletter, Summer 1991, which credited the Northwest Iowa Root Diggers, Vol. 12, No. 2 and Broken Mts. G.S. Vol. 10, #2 and is via Leafy Branche Vol. 32:2 (1995)

Prairie Pioneers Gen. Soc. Grand Island, Neb.
Oct. 95

Blizzard of 1888 was a '400-year storm'

By MERCER CROSS

National Geographic News Service

WASHINGTON — A century later, people still talk about the Great Blizzard of 1888, the cataclysmic storm that struck the East Coast from Maine to Maryland, taking more than 400 lives and causing damage that would have totaled billions in today's dollars.

The unpredicted March blizzard, caused by the dramatic collision of two massive weather fronts, affected one-fourth of the nation's population and cut off many of its largest cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington.

One of the first comprehensive reports on the causes and effects of the gigantic storm was published in the original issue of National Geographic magazine in October 1888. Accompanied by colored meteorological charts, the article combined scientific explanation with dramatic accounts of a few of the 200 vessels blown ashore, sunk, damaged, or abandoned.

BECAUSE OF its size and the ferocity with which the storm hit it, New York City was the center of attention. About 200 people died there alone. Legends of bravery and tragedy started growing before the 30-foot snowdrifts had melted.

Usually overlooked, however, is another devastating blizzard that preceded the eastern one by two months in a broad area of the Midwest, laying low thousands of homesteaders. One estimate of the death toll is 109, but others believe that count is low because of the area's widely scattered population and scant communications.

The January 1888 storm is sometimes called the "schoolchildren's blizzard." It struck so suddenly that numerous children and their teachers were stranded overnight in bleak schoolhouses in, for example, Nebraska and the Dakota Territory.

The midwesterners have their own brand of blizzard legends of heroism and of death by freezing. Many of the stories involve teachers and pupils.

IN NEBRASKA, one of the best-remembered heroines was a teen-age teacher named Minnie May Freeman. When the wind ripped a hole in the roof of her sod schoolhouse at Ord, she herded her 16 charges, frost-bitten but safe, to her nearby boarding house.

Lois May Royce, a teacher at Plainview, Neb., wasn't so fortunate. Attempting to lead her three small pupils 200 yards to her dwelling, she got lost in the blinding snow. The three children died. Both of Miss Royce's frozen feet had to be amputated, and one arm was permanently disabled.

In New York City, perhaps the most famous blizzard victim was Roscoe Conkling, lawyer, former U.S. senator, and prospective presidential candidate.

Unable to get a taxi, the 58-year-old Conkling set out on foot from his Wall Street office for his club on 25th Street. It took him three hours to shoulder his way through the drifts. Arriving at the club, he crashed exhausted to the floor of its entrance.

As a result of his ordeal, he developed pneumonia and mastoiditis and died the next month.

Both of the immense storms caught large sections of the United States unaware. Both followed mild weather, leaving people unprepared for the sudden, violent change. More than 30 years would pass before commercial radio would broadcast storm warnings.

"I DON'T KNOW that we would have automatically predicted the blizzard of '88 any better," says Murray Mitchell of McLean, Va., a retired climatologist for the federal government. Even modern forecasters, with vastly more sophisticated equipment, occasionally can be fooled, he admits.

Many of the places affected by the 1888 storms have recorded deeper snow, colder winds, and lower temperatures. But what made both of these blizzards historic was the intense combination of those three elements.

One expert has written that hydrologists would describe the 1888 eastern blizzard as a "400-year storm," a meteorological event of such magnitude that it could be expected to occur on the average of once every four centuries. Others have called it a "100-year storm." The same terms would apply to the western blizzard.

That doesn't necessarily mean we're due for a repeat performance. "Weather comes in clusters," Mitchell says. "It's not uncommon to find two extreme events coming within a few days or weeks or years of each other."

THE GREAT Blizzard of the East bequeathed some lasting benefits. An unknown number of New Yorkers found themselves stranded aboard windblown elevated trains. Their plight helped lead to the construction of subways there and in other cities.

Telephone and telegraph poles toppled like tenpins during the eastern howler, cutting off President Cleveland and everybody else in the nation's capital from outside communication. As a result, many cables have since been buried underground.

Forever etched on the memories of survivors, both 1888 blizzards inspired the organization of blizzard clubs for the purpose of swapping reminiscences. After gathering regularly since 1927, the New York City group ceased meeting in 1973.

At the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, the January 12th 1888 Blizzard Club, organized in 1940, held its final meeting recently. With all its survivors gone, it depends on their descendants and history buffs for its sparse annual attendance.

But devotees aren't giving up. One descendant says she hopes the meetings will continue under a new name: the 1949 Blizzard Club. That was the winter of another dandy storm, one worthy of its own reminiscences.

Source unknown

Blizzard of '88 memories told on 105th anniversary

To mark Tuesday as the 105th anniversary of the blizzard of 1888, it seems only appropriate that severe winter weather has struck Northeast Nebraska.

A Norfolk man has provided an account of the 1888 blizzard, thanks to the recollections of his late father.

Tom Carraher of Norfolk said his father, Frank, who lived at Petersburg at the time, was 15 years old when the storm hit and walked two miles in the midst of it to return to the family home.

In 1942, Frank Carraher was business manager of the Petersburg Index newspaper and wrote about his experiences. The article was reprinted in 1963 when Tom Carraher was publishing the Petersburg Press.

The younger Carraher later served as associate dean of community services at Northeast Community College in Norfolk until retiring in recent years. He remains active as an adjunct teacher for Northeast and Wayne State College and advises on legal matters as needed.

The blizzard of '88 remains as one of the worst storms to ever hit the Midwest.

FOLLOWING IS Frank Carraher's story about the storm and how it affected Northeast Nebraska:

"At the date of this now famous blizzard, I was living with my parents on a farm located 10 miles due west of Madison. My brother Mark and sister Eustochium and I were attending school at what was called the Iowa Valley School, located a mile south and three-quarters of a mile west of our home.

"On the morning of that never-to-be-forgotten day, the weather was warm as I remember it, and I recall that at the afternoon recess while we were all out of school playing, it began to snow, coming down in big soft flakes.

"That was about 3 o'clock. We were all shouting and laughing and having a fine time when one of our neighbors came up to the school door on horseback and told the teacher there was a bad blizzard coming and that he had better dismiss school.

"I remember the man was Cy Barnes, an old man with a gray beard and a typical Yankee accent. He was an oldtimer in the commu-

nity even then, but how he ever knew there was a storm approaching I have never been able to tell.

"He certainly proved a good prophet, because less than 30 minutes afterward, the wind shifted to the northwest and soon reached a gale. It got much colder and those big flakes of snow turned to powder, making it difficult to breathe and almost impossible to see.

"THE TEACHER dismissed school at once, and by having the children all take hold of hands, with himself in the center, they managed to get to a house not far from the school where they stayed all night and until the storm was over.

"As for myself, there was 'no place like home' for me, storm or no storm. Not realizing the danger, I headed for home nearly two miles away.

"Fortunately, I didn't get rattled and planned the route I was to take in advance, following corn rows and fire guards. I recall that I could see only about 10 feet or less ahead of me and the blinding snow kept melting on my forehead and running down into my eyes.

"I was lucky enough to have a good pair of dogskin mitts that I had made myself, and I took my slate along and held it up in front of my face. That helped a lot.

"You can be sure my parents were overjoyed when I opened the door and they knew that I was all right and that brother and sister were safe at the neighbor's.

"The storm lasted all night, but next morning the sun was shining and of course, it was very cold. The snow was drifted high around the house and barns.

"A DAY OR TWO after the storm, one of our neighbors, a Bohemian by the name of Veck, was found frozen to death lying in the road a mile south of our home.

"He was found face down, evidently just as he had fallen exhausted, with his face on his hands and his elbows sticking out. I remember that the neighbors made a special coffin to bury him in the position he was in when found.

"This poor man was herding his cattle in the corn stalks and when the storm struck, the cattle ran with it and he tried to follow them ... and never returned.

"My sister Alice (later Mrs. Mike O'Brien of the Akron and Spalding area) was teaching school



Photo by Michael Vosburg

It's Nebraska and the snow is falling, but at least it isn't the "Blizzard of '88." Here Dave Huisman chips at packed snow and ice in the driveway of the Bob Willett home at 508 N. 13th St., on Monday.

near St. Bernard in Platte County about 10 miles from our home. When the storm struck there, she had the good judgment to call the children all into the schoolhouse and there she kept them all night.

"She had them all put on their wraps and even then it was none too warm in the little building. After the blizzard the next day,

some of the men managed to get there on horseback bringing lunches.

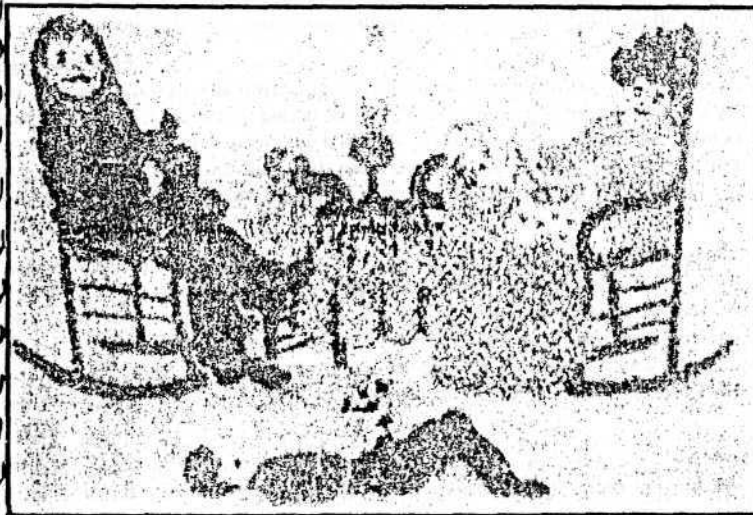
"There was great rejoicing in the homes of that district when the parents learned that none of their children had suffered any harm from one of the worst, if not the worst blizzard that ever struck state of Nebraska."

Source Norfolk Daily News 13 Jan 1993

Family Folklore

Interviewing Guide and Questionnaire

Folklife Program
Office of American and Folklife Studies
Smithsonian Institution



For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

During the past three years the staff members of the Smithsonian Institution's Family Folklore Project have interviewed hundreds of persons about their family folklore. To prepare for these interviews we drew upon our academic backgrounds in folklore and American studies and upon our personal backgrounds as members of families. In addition, we reviewed the major instruction guides in genealogy, oral history, family history, and folklore fieldwork. Although these publications were all helpful in some way, no single book was completely adequate since family folklore combines aspects of all the above disciplines. Over time we have developed guidelines and questions that have proved successful for us; we hope that the following suggestions will be helpful to anyone who wishes to collect the folklore of his or her own family.

Before you begin:

Family folklore is not static. It exists only as part of the day to day living of a family. To separate it from this natural context would be to rob it of its vitality and its existence as folklore; the material thus gathered would become simply a report *about* family folklore and not a collection *of* family folklore. It is essential to remember that the story itself is as important as the information it conveys. This is the essential distinction between family folklore and the closely related disciplines of genealogy and family history. The following suggestions are designed to help you focus on these folkloric aspects of your family's past.

A word of warning. Because family folklore exists only within the context of a living family, it is constantly evolving. Each generation will forget or alter the lore that it has received; on the other hand, that same generation will add new verbal lore and new traditions. This creative aspect of family folklore affects the researcher in two ways. First, no matter how hard you try, you will never record the entire body of your family's folklore since there will never be a moment in which it will be totally static. Don't despair. Record what you can and encourage other family members to do the same. Just think of collecting family folklore as a pastime for which you have an infinite supply of raw material close at hand. The second way in which the creative aspect of family folklore affects the researcher is in his time orientation. The family folklorist cannot be so absorbed with preserving the past that he neglects to record the present. Keep your eyes, ears, and mind open. A tradition does not have to be old to be worth recording. In fact, a good part of any family's tradition is ephemeral and may not last long enough to pass from one generation to another. Collecting family folklore is one case in which too much is better than too little. Tapes can be edited and transcripts can be discarded, but the tradition, story or expression that you neglect to record today may exist only in memory next week.

As self-appointed family folklorist you now have two tasks ahead of you; to learn your family's folklore and to record it for others to enjoy.

The equipment:

Note-taking and tape recording are the usual means of recording family folklore. The tape recorder is the means of choice. Writing during an interview or family event has a number of disadvantages. Most people find note-taking to be both tedious and difficult. It is hard to maintain a conversation or participate actively in the ongoing activities. Visual contact is lost. A complete, accurate account of the story—especially if it is long and detailed—is difficult to obtain. Although the words may be written down, the subtleties of the performance are inevitably lost.

Although both you and your informant might be uneasy and uncomfortable with a tape recorder, you will soon become accustomed to its presence. A small cassette machine with a built-in omni-directional microphone will give the best results. It is easy to use and so inconspicuous that its presence will soon be forgotten. A ninety minute cassette (forty-five minutes per side) is a good choice since it is economical, unlikely to tangle, and long enough to record substantial segments of an interview without interruption.

The microphone should be placed so that all voices, including yours, can be picked up. Run a test before you begin the actual interview and adjust the machine accordingly. The end of a two-hour interview is no time to discover that you've forgotten to push the record button or that the volume control was incorrectly adjusted! Read carefully any instructions that come with the particular tape recorder that you are using.

As far as possible all extraneous noise should be eliminated. Turn off the radio, close the window, move away from the window fan. A few minutes spent finding the proper spot for the tape recorder can save you many hours when it comes time to transcribe the interview and you struggle to distinguish grandma's voice from the roar of a passing airplane. The recorder should also be placed where it will not be disturbed during the interview and where you will have easy access to it when it becomes necessary to change tapes.

Although not as essential as a tape recorder, a camera is a useful piece of equipment. It provides a visual record of the interview and the informant. It can also be used to copy any documentary records that the informant might offer, such as photographs or scrapbooks.

The people:

Who should you start with? Your oldest relative? The one you feel most at ease with? No. The place to begin is with yourself. You are just as much a bearer of your family's traditions as any member of your family. Use yourself as an informant and ask yourself the questions that follow on pages 6-8. You may be surprised at how much you know about some areas and how little about others. It is very likely that you will know more about one side of the family than another, for instance. Use your answers as a starting point for questioning other family members. The best questions come from a well-informed person. Once you

have collected family folklore from yourself, try to remember family structure. Who are your relatives? Which ones are most likely to have information and be willing to share it? Who gets along with whom? What topics are likely to be sensitive? These are all essential questions that you can begin to answer yourself.

The first outside person that you interview should be someone with whom you feel very comfortable. Interviewing is not easy and you would do well to get your introduction to it in the presence of a friendly face. A parent or sibling might be a good choice. Young children often have great success with grandparents.

As you continue your interviewing you will pick up clues that will help you find potential narrators: "You should talk to Uncle Joe about that," or "Aunt Jane is a much better storyteller than I am." Whenever possible ask directly for sources: "Can you tell me who might know more about that?" As you become more and more involved with the search you will meet relatives that you never even knew you had! Don't neglect non-relatives, either. Your grandfather's best friend may be able to tell you things about him that no family member would know. Don't overlook other members of the household who were not relatives, such as nursemaids or long-term boarders. Try not to be misled by terms of address. Aunt, uncle, sister, brother and cousin are especially troublesome words since they can indicate respect, affection and brotherhood as easily as blood or marriage relationships. And although they won't be much help as sources of information on family folklore, don't forget family pets since they can frequently be found as characters in family stories.

The interview:

The most productive family folklore interviews are those that take place in a natural context for the reasons explained at the beginning of this guide: family folklore is a living part of a family and cannot be successfully separated from the everyday activities of that family. This can present problems since it will be impossible for you to be present during every naturally occurring folkloric event. You should make use of such opportunities whenever possible, however. Some common natural contexts are family dinners, picnics, reunions and holidays. These are the times at which families would tell stories whether or not you are there with your tape recorder. Under these circumstances you will probably not even have to conduct an interview—just adjust the recorder, relax, and participate as you ordinarily would.

If no spontaneous natural context seems to be available you will have to rely on what is called an induced natural context. The distinction is straightforward. Instead of waiting for a family dinner to occur in the normal course of events, you initiate one. This approach has the added advantage of giving you a degree of control over the situation. For example, you can invite specific relatives who interact well with each other. Try serving foods that you know will bring back memories from the past.

The group interview context, whether natural or induced, has one major characteristic that makes it extremely fruitful. The interaction that occurs as a matter of course serves to spark the memories of the participants. One story leads into another,

one interpretation elicits cries of "but that's not really the way it happened at all!" The end result of such an interview will differ greatly from private interviews with the same relatives.

Private interviews can also be either natural or induced. If grandma begins to talk to you about her journey to this country while you are washing the supper dishes, fine—unfortunately, you probably won't be prepared with a tape recorder. If you wish to privately interview a relative, try not to do so under formal circumstances. Suggest some activity that will allow you to maintain a conversation easily but will help keep the session natural and low key—going for a walk, sewing, baking. If you know beforehand that a particular activity is usually a time for storytelling, schedule your interview to coincide with that event. Familiar surroundings and routine activities will also help to distract the informant from the fact that he or she is being interviewed and will lessen the unsettling impact of the tape recorder.

Every interview that you do will be unique. The questions on pages 6-8 will supply some uniformity, although you will probably be selective in using them. The following brief suggestions should be helpful in most circumstances.

1. Ask evocative questions. Nothing can kill an interview faster than a long series of questions that require only yes or no as answers.
2. Face up to the fact that there will be some information that *you* will not get. You may be the wrong sex or age. A relative may simply not trust you with sensitive data. If you feel you must have the missing material you may be able to solicit the help of another relative or friend as an interviewer.
3. Be aware that role switching will occur. Rather than being just a son or daughter you are becoming an interrogator. Both you and your informant may feel uneasy in these new roles. A low key approach in a natural setting should help relieve some of the discomfort.
4. Show interest. Encourage your informants as much as possible. Interject remarks whenever appropriate. Take an active part in the conversation without dominating it. Learn to be a good listener as well as a good questioner.
5. Know what questions you want to ask, but don't be afraid to let your informant go off on a tangent. He or she might just touch on subjects of interest that you never thought to ask about.
6. Never turn off the tape recorder unless asked to. Not only does it break the conversation, such action suggests that you think some of your informant's material is not worth recording.
7. Use props whenever possible. Documents, letters, photo albums, scrapbooks, home movies and other family heirlooms can all be profitably used to stimulate memories.
8. Be sensitive to the needs of family members. Schedule your sessions at a convenient time. Older people tire easily; cut the interview off at the first sign of fatigue. Don't slight family members who show interest in your project. Interview them, even if you have reason to believe their material will be of minimal value. Each interview

should be a pleasant and rewarding experience for all parties involved.

9. If possible, prepare some sort of written report for the family as a tangible result of their participation. Remember to save all of your tapes, notes and any other documentation that you have accumulated (and you will!). Label everything with names, dates and places. Ideally, all tapes should be indexed and transcribed. You will be more conscientious about documentation if you place yourself in the position of your great-grandchild who, many decades in the future, will be using your project as a source for his reconstruction.

A question of ethics:

Most of your relatives will be delighted by your new found interest in collecting family folklore. Some will undoubtedly wonder if you've gone slightly mad. Unfortunately, a few may be uncooperative and even hostile. Because of the personal nature of the folklore that you will be collecting, you should be very careful to protect the privacy and rights of all family members. Be honest about your intent from the very beginning. Explain your reasons for doing the research. Is it a school assignment? Do you simply want to learn more about your family? Do you plan to publish your findings? The ultimate disposition of the collection may affect their willingness to talk about certain subjects.

You may find it difficult to explain what family folklore is and why you want to record it. Your relatives will most likely equate your research with genealogy and family history. No harm will be done if you explain your research in those terms since the areas are so interrelated.

Don't make promises you can't or don't intend to keep. If you say that you will erase part of a tape, do so, even if it means losing some important information. Respect confidences and privacy. Let your informants see anything that will be published before it is too late to alter the manuscript. The intimate nature of family folklore places burdens on the researcher that are restrictive and sometimes frustrating. Fortunately, the bulk of your collection will be non-controversial. One last ground rule: Never, under any circumstance, record secretly. There is never any justification for such dishonesty. Such behavior can only result in bad feelings within the family.

In conclusion:

Please do not be discouraged by all the do's and don't's that we have outlined in these pages. Once you have begun collecting your own family's folklore you will realize that the guidelines are based on common sense and lots of practice. Vary them to suit your own family circumstances. Improve them with our blessing and encouragement. And above all, enjoy yourself, your family and your folklore.

A Possible Questionnaire:

Every family is unique. Every folklore fieldworker has his or her own special

interests and style of interviewing. Because of this diversity, we feel strongly that no single set of questions will successfully elicit family folklore from all families. The most useful questions will be those that you develop through your knowledge of yourself and your family. For your initial efforts you may find the following list of questions helpful. Just remember that they are meant to be suggestive, not absolute. Pick and choose among them as you see fit. By all means change the wording to suit your own situation and personality.

1. What do you know about your family surname? Its origin? Its meaning? Did it undergo change coming from the Old Country to the United States? Are there stories about the change?
2. Are there any traditional first names, middle names or nicknames in your family? Is there a naming tradition, such as always giving the firstborn son the name of his paternal grandfather?
3. Can you sort out the traditions in your current family according to the branches of the larger family from which they have come? Does the overall tradition of a specific grandparent seem to be dominant?
4. What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors? How have these relatives described their lives to you? What have you learned from them about their childhood, adolescence, schooling, marriage, work, religion, political activity, recreation? Are they anxious or reluctant to discuss the past? Do their memories tend to cluster about certain topics or time periods and avoid others? Are there certain things in your family history that you would like to know, but no one will tell you? Do various relatives tell the same stories in different ways? How do these versions differ?
5. Do you have a notorious or infamous character in your family's past? Do you relish stories about him/her? Do you feel that the infamy of the ancestor may have grown as stories passed down about him/her have been elaborated? Would you like to think your ancestors were pirates even though down deep you know that they were honest, hard-working people?
6. How did your parents, grandparents, and other relatives, come to meet and marry? Are there family stories of lost love, jilted brides, unusual courtships, arranged marriages, elopements, runaway lovers?
7. Have any historical events affected your family? For example, how did your family survive the Depression? Did conflict over some national event such as the Civil War or Vietnam cause a serious break in family relationships?
8. Are there any stories in your family about how a great fortune was lost or almost (but not quite) made? Do you believe them? Are these incidents laughed about or deeply regretted? If a fortune was made, who was responsible and how was it achieved?
9. What expressions are used in your family? Did they come from specific incidents? Are there stories which explain their origin? Is a particular member of the family especially adept at creating expressions?

10. How are holidays celebrated in your family? What holidays are most important—national, religious or family? What innovations has your family made in holiday celebrations? Has your family created entirely new holidays?

11. Does your family hold reunions? How often? When? Where? Who is invited? Who comes? Who are the organizers and hosts? What occurs during the reunion? Are there traditional foods, customs, activities? Are stories and photographs exchanged? Are records (oral, written, visual) kept? By whom?

12. Have any recipes been preserved in your family from past generations? What was their origin? How were they passed down—by word of mouth, by observation, by written recipes? Are they still in use today? When? By whom? Does grandmother's apple pie taste as good now that it's made by her granddaughter?

13. What other people (friends, household help, etc.) have been incorporated into your family? When? Why? Were these people given family title such as aunt or cousin? Did they participate fully in family activities?

14. Is there a family cemetery or burial plot? Who is buried with whom? Why? Who makes burial place decisions? If there are grave markers, what type of information is recorded on them?

15. Does your family have any heirlooms, objects of sentimental or monetary value that have been handed down? What are they? Are there stories connected with them? Do you know their origin and line of passage through the generations? If they pass to you, will you continue the tradition, sell the objects, or give them to museums?

16. Does your family have photo albums, scrapbooks, slides, home movies? Who created them? Whose pictures are contained in them? Whose responsibility is their upkeep? When are they displayed? To whom? Are they specially arranged and edited? Does their appearance elicit commentary? What kind? By whom? Is the showing of these images a happy occasion?

Written by:

Holly-Cutting Baker and Amy Kotkin, Smithsonian Institution
Margaret Yocom, George Mason University
Program Coordinator:
Steven Zeitlin, Smithsonian Institution

The 100 page book, FAMILY FOLKLORE, a collection and discussion of family stories, expressions, traditions, photographs and memorabilia, is available by writing to: Folklife Programs, L'Enfant 2100, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. The cost is \$3.00. Please make check payable to the Smithsonian Institution.

Portions of this publication are reprinted with the permission of the Maryland Arts Council Folklife Program in whose model course outline entitled, *Family Folklore* (© 1976) they first appeared.

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Tips & Tricks

WARNING: Some Albums Hazardous to Photos

by
Peg Meier

The old family scrapbook, the kind Grandma used to put together, is still the best way to preserve pictures. You remember — the type of album with photographs secured by those little photo corners, with birthday cards and toddlers' drawings pasted right in. With notes written below the pictures, telling who's who at the family reunion.

The most popular type of photo album—the "magnetic" kind with pages of plastic that lay over the photos—is very hazardous to photos. It has no magnets, but its cardboard pages grip photos on a sticky adhesive coating covered by a layer of plastic which is peeled back to position the photos. This kind of album causes rapid fading and discoloration. The plastic "eats" the photos.

Also destructive are imported photo albums with slip-in pocket pages. Chemicals in these pages can completely fade a photograph in three to five years. Some slip-in types are relatively safe but they tend to be expensive and the format may not accept different size photos or permit attractive display of both vertical and horizontal prints.

Actually, the family that has stuffed photos in a shoe box or dresser drawer is one step ahead of those who have carefully arranged photos in "magnetic" albums. Anyone with magnetic albums is advised to remove the photos—the sooner the better. If the photos have already begun to stick to the plastic, it can be tricky to remove them.

Photography professionals say many albums sold or given away are so chemically harmful to photos they should carry a label reading "WARNING! The Archive General has determined PVC and magnetic pages are hazardous to your heritage!"

Archival quality materials from Light Impressions of Rochester, NY and University Products of Holyoke, MA are recommended because these companies go to extra lengths to be sure their materials are kind to photos.

All color photos will fade in time, but some will deteriorate more quickly than others. Color prints, even if stored in the dark, will begin to fade in eight to ten years. The decay process will be faster if they are exposed to fluorescent light or sunlight.

Custom color prints made by the Cibachrome process can be expected to last about 100 years. Color slides generally promise a life span of 50 years and Kodak says its Kodachrome slide film can last up to 90 years. Here are some tips for people interested in beginning scrapbooks:

- Buy a scrapbook with smooth white paper (colored paper and rough textures tend to have photo-destroying acids).
- Use rubber cement to glue in items, but check the label on the bottle. Look for "Excellent for mounting photos." Watch out for "Do not use for photos" (that kind of honesty in packaging does not extend to plastic slip-in photo sheets. Some which claim to be free of PVCs are still harmful to photos).
- Arrange the photos and mementos in chronological order.
- Date the photos or guess about when they were taken.
- Label all the people.
- Write in the book, not on the photo (ink harms the photo).
- Don't include every photo you take.
- Include black and white photos. At least once a year, shoot a roll of black and white film. Those negatives will last many generations longer than color, all of which will eventually fade to nothing.

- Don't cut Polaroid prints.

(Excerpted from article in Minneapolis Star Tribune via Fulton Co. (IN) Folk Finder. Submitted by Rose

Editor's Note:

This afternoon my friendly mailman brought me a copy of the LIGHT IMPRESSIONS catalog mentioned in the above article, and I am impressed with all of the special boxes, albums and other items a good genealogist probably needs. I am sure that if you need it — this is where you are probably going to find it! In my opinion, the prices for these specialty items seemed a little bit high, but maybe that is because they ARE specialty items! (Anyway, the catalog is free!)

Their toll free number is: 1-800-828-6216 and their address is:

LIGHT IMPRESSIONS
4349 Monroe Ave.
P.O Box 940
Rochester, NY 14603-0940

Prairie Pioneers Gen. Soc. October, 1995

The National Archives-Central Plains Region in Kansas City has more than 35,000 cubic feet of historical records. Among them are photographs, maps, and architectural drawings, dating from about 1821 to the 1980s. These records were created or received by the Federal courts and over 70 Federal agencies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Both original records and microfilm publications are open for research

Among subjects of local interest are: frontier and territorial history; American Indians native to the Northern Great Plains; the development of natural resources; court cases involving fugitive slave Dred Scott, "Birdman of Alcatraz" Robert Stroud, automobile entrepreneur Henry Ford, and civil rights pioneer Oliver Brown, who challenged school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

A descriptive *Guide to Records in the National Archives-Central Plains Region* is available on request and research can be initiated in person, by phone, or by mail.

(Above information is excerpted from a brochure. The address of the National Archives-Central Plains Region is 2312 East Bannister Rd.—Kansas City, Missouri, 64131. Ph. 1-(816) 926-6272.

Prairie Pioneers Gen. Soc, October, 1995

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* MADISON COUNTY GENEALOGY SOCIETY *
* P. O. Box 1031 *
* Norfolk, Nebraska 68702-1031 *
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Bernice Dewey
306 E. Prospect Ave
Norfolk, NE 68701