

Heritage Themes

Although many of us gather lots of family heritage facts, we don't necessarily give time to creative ways of displaying it. We look at the "pile" of facts, letters, photos, certificates

and such, and feel overwhelmed. Creating a heritage album, or telling your family story, can seem impossible. Often the difficulty may be in thinking that you have to start at the

beginning, and methodically tell the whole chronology of your family. Instead, try thinking of your heritage from a theme standpoint. You can create many albums, with each centered around a specific theme as it pertains to your family. What do we mean by themes? Here are some examples.

Military: Create a tribute album of all the men & women in your family who served in the armed forces. This can be especially moving if you have ancestors who served in early wars and family who have served in recent times. Tell a brief history of their military career with copies of service records and photos. Of great interest would be tidbits from regimental or unit histories. If available, be sure to include recollections or stories about their service. Grandpa always told about his dad living off of sweet potatoes in the farm fields during the Civil War. This will personalize the individual to all who see your album.

Family Recipes: How many great recipes are in your family? How many have been handed down? Preserve these wonderful dishes from the past and present in a special recipe album. Besides the actual recipe, things you can also include are a picture of

the dish and the person attributed with it, any traditions associated with the recipe, and peoples favorite memories surrounding it. Just as important though, be sure to leave room

for your descendants to add their future favorites.

Occupations: Create an album of the many ways your ancestors earned their living. What were their occupations? How did the events of the day impact them in their work? Include their picture and any memorabilia or documents. Try to describe a typical day for them based on the history of the time, for example, what did a shoemaker, like my 2nd great grandfather, do. If your family has a business that has been around for more than one generation, this would be a wonderful history to have.

Geography: No, this is not a test! In times past, many of our families tended to live in the same community. Clustering is probably the right word. Although a bit more challenging,

create an album of their residences. Where did they live? In the city? On a farm? While it may not be possible to show the actual house, it is possible to get a picture of the location. Include a copy of a map from an atlas of the time showing exactly where they lived, along with picture and/or biography of the family. Again, include

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stories or recollections if available. As in the "Occupation" album, describe a typical day for a family in that time period. What were the major social influences of the time? I remember grandma talking about the flu epidemic in the early 1900s causing many to be fearful to leave their house.

Potpourri:

- Create an album of your favorite women or men. Tell a bit about them and why they're a favorite.
- How about an album of family traditions, stories and folklore? Don't worry if they're true or not, preserve them and the people associated with them.
- If you have family reunions, create an album of them to hand down to later generations.

Don't be overwhelmed... think themes!

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