

## Storytelling With a Purpose

### What's a Story?

A story may be communicated in many forms such as a cautionary tale, joke, experience, fable, eye witness account, parable, history and more. Stories may be shared via text, drawings, photos, oral commentary or video clips.

When a story resonates within our heart or mind it releases a flood of emotions, mental images, reflective thoughts or causes a really good belly laugh *complete with tears*.

Storytelling occurs in cars, boats, airplanes, around campfires, in churches, at political rallies, on cave walls, at funerals, on mountain tops, in movies, during hikes, on grandpa's lap, and more.

Life would be a dull experience without a good story now and then. Now it's your turn to start sharing stories.

### Why Tell Stories?

Most of us have a basic need to share our thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others. Typically we tell stories when we want to contribute or "connect" with our family, friends, or a group of people. The following is a short list of why we tell stories:



Nathan shares a story with his mom

- Teach
- Share
- Comfort
- Contribute
- Persuade
- Warn or caution
- Illustrate a point
- Reinforce a concept
- Provide background
- Make a point

### Become a Digital Storyteller



**Heritage Collector makes it easy and fun to create interesting digital stories.**

Using a computer to tell and share stories makes it possible to affect the lives of your children, grandchildren, and relatives for years to come.

Using photos, video clips and narrative will breathe new life and excitement into old family stories.

- Tell Simple Stories Using Photos
- Create and Use Simple Animations
- Add Narrative to Sideshows
- Use Hotspots to Create Photo Stories
- Share Interactive Stories and Sideshows
- Include Mini Stories in Mixed Media Collections.

## Creating a Good Story

- ✓ **Begin with the end in mind.** Select a simple topic. *Create an outline before you begin.*
- ✓ **Write a draft.** Start by writing a brief summary. Read the draft and add more information and detail as it comes to mind.
- ✓ **Take your time writing.** Don't rush yourself to "finish" the story. More detail and information will be remembered if you work on the story for just a few minutes each day.
- ✓ **Related stories.** Other stories will come to mind as you write. Give these "other" stories a brief title and write the name down on another sheet of paper and file it for future reference.
- ✓ **Read your story out loud.** This is an excellent and simple way to find typos and get a feel for how the story sounds and flows from one topic to another. *Read it when no one is around.*
- ✓ **Add photos, maps and other information.** When possible, find a photo to go with each section, paragraph or different thought in the story. Don't have the exact photo? Take some pictures with your digital camera to illustrate your story.

### Where to Begin? Story Selection

Start simple. Write, type, or record stories that come into your mind. Use the easiest method for you to quickly gather and record your thoughts and ideas. It's important to get the basic information recorded before it's forgotten. Refining a story is easy if you work on it a little each day.

### What Makes a Story Memorable?

A story that resonates in our mind and heart is unforgettable and has the power to enrich and change lives. The following list contains some of the attributes that make a story memorable and touching:

- Motivates and uplifts your spirit.
- Faith promoting and encourages us to keep trying.
- Funny or humorous.
- Touching or empathetic.
- Love of Country - Patriotic.
- Teaches basic humanity, caring and understanding.
- Helps us feel in touch with a parent or close relative.
- Talks directly to you by using I, you, we or our.
- Create mind pictures using words, sounds, photos.
- Present candid "real" life photos and experiences.
- Provide maps, voice, photos, and GPS coordinates to make the story believable and tangible.
- Simple, short and focused stories are more interesting than a long and tedious one.

### The Moral of the Story

What's the purpose of the story? Perhaps the most important and rewarding part of any story is the little summary, or moral, contained at the end. Here are few suggested story endings or morals:

- Advice or a warning.
- Good prevailing over bad.
- Follies of youth and lessons learned.
- Revealing and rewarding selfless acts.
- How faith and tenacity was rewarded.
- Humor in a good lesson by laughing at ourselves.
- Understanding and relating to the struggles of others.
- Positive outcome and wisdom of a noble act.
- Appreciation for our heritage and sacrifices.

### Many Stories Need to be Told

Countless stories and memories are tucked away in our minds. Some of these stories and events should be retrieved and shared with others?

- Historical family information.
- Philosophy of life, beliefs and values.
- Humorous or embarrassing situations.
- Turning points or events that changed your life.
- Stories about parents and grandparents.
- Accomplishments.
- How you "popped" the question.
- Personal growing up experiences.
- Experiences demonstrating family values.
- Survival stories.
- Near death encounters or close calls.
- Fun experiences.
- Issues and politics of the day.
- Conquering adversity.

### A "Mini" Story - Quick and Interesting

It's the little things in life that add the spice to our everyday experiences. Unlock the secrets, share the treasures, and hidden stories in your photos. Heritage Collector's "Talking Hot Spots" allow photos to magically tell some interesting and amazing vignettes about a variety of topics - *the photo can tell oral stories when it is viewed*. Instead of delivering a travelogue of dates and names, now you can add detailed and interesting supplemental information to a photo or slideshow.



*Breakdown in the mountains - Pushin' the jeep home*

## Example: Stories From My Youth “Terror Under the Bridge”

*The minds of young teenagers on lazy hot summer afternoons are easily drawn to a dip in the cooling waters of the nearby irrigation canal. What could be better than pumping up an old inner tube and spending the whole afternoon floating down the canal?*



Heritage Collector was used to enhance the story. Hotspots appear superimposed over a map. Narrative plays sequentially while hotspots appear to illustrate key locations of the journey

When I was about 15 years old, my friends discovered a way to float down about 15 miles of the Idaho canal and come to within two city blocks of where we lived.

One very hot July day my friends all voted it was time for the annual canal float trip. We pumped up some old tire inner tubes and begged an older friend to drive us 15 miles to a big headgate where we started our trip. We didn't know or care about life jackets, we had inner tubes.

I remember the day well. The temperature was in the high 90's but the water in the canal was refreshing and cool. It was loads of fun. We had water fights, swam under water and pushed each other off our tubes, watched the fish swimming under our feet and talked about the subject of girls which none of us could understand - girls were still a big mystery to us. All that was important was that we knew how to float the canal.

We floated several hours navigating the changes we had to make to end up in our neighborhood and not far out in the farmlands.

Near the end of the journey, the canal passed under a bridge without much clearance between the bottom of the bridge and the water. We usually portaged around this bridge but this was a different day. We were feeling more grown up and had plenty of the male hormones that stimulate the sense of irrational invincibility which is definitely a negative to the survivability of young males.

A last minute contest of bravery (stupidity) was devised. A test to see who would "chicken out" first and get out of the canal and walk around the bridge. It then turned into a stare down contest. No one blinked, just big nervous smiles as we approached the bridge.

Soon my oldest friend upped the ante and dared everyone to lay on top of their inner tubes and go under the bridge flat on their back. That was enough for me. I was the only one with enough guts to "chicken out" by getting off my tube and putting one arm through the hole so I would be standing upright as I floated under the bridge.

I was several feet behind my friends as they neared and started disappearing under the bridge. The laughs and teasing comments stopped abruptly and were replaced with high pitched shrieks and yells for help. I soon heard, "This is terrible, awful, and I can't stand this. We've got to get out of here. Help!"

Naturally, I started to become really afraid. It was dark under the bridge and I couldn't see them anymore, just heard all those frantic squeals for help.

The bridge was coming up fast, the current was too swift to swim to the bank and it was too steep to climb out. I thought my time on earth was about to end under a dark bridge! All I could do was float under the bridge into a unknown disaster that would occur in the dark.

Once under the bridge I could see my friends out the other side of the bridge and they were unharmed and laughing so hard they almost couldn't speak.

What happened to terrorize them so badly? Something you'd never expect and you couldn't see. SPIDERS! Lots of very BIG spiders hanging down on webs trying to catch insects flying under the bridge.



As my friends floated face up under the bridge, they broke all the spider webs causing very big and ugly Catface spiders to crawl all over their faces, bare stomachs and legs. They could not roll off their inner tubes because there was not enough clearance between them and the bridge girders. All they could do was try to brush the spiders off their bodies with their hands and hope they made it to the other side before a spider bit them.

I've found this a great story to share with my kids and grandkids because it has a powerful and tangible moral that is easy to identify with. **"Sometimes you have to go against the crowd and do what is right and best for you!" It will pay off in the end.**

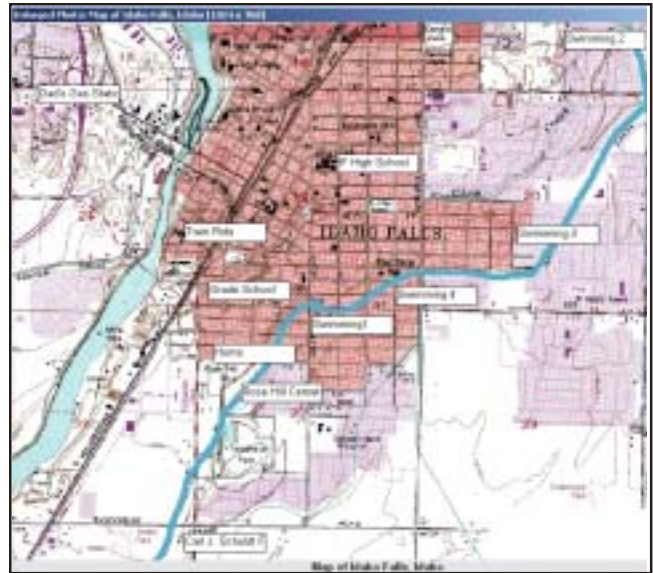
I didn't get one spider on me. Not one of my friends called me "Chicken." They all knew I had made the smart decision. They had acted like courageous teenage fools.

# The Making of “Terror Under the Bridge”

Reading the real life spider story on the preceding page is very interesting and stimulating to most people. However, the impact of the story is greatly enhanced and believability is increased by seeing a map of the canal that automatically plays narration and displays hot spots in a predetermined sequence.

The adjacent photo (screen capture) is a city map of Idaho Falls, Idaho where I grew up. This photo can actually tell many of my stories using my voice. When clicked, each of the white hot spots will tell a brief story of my youth. Hot spots can also play sequentially in a slide show. Some of the stories are:

- Working in my dad’s gas station.
- Where I grew up.
- The high school I attended.
- A dumb but scary midnight train ride.
- The spider story.
- Inadvertently Attending a Burial High up in a Pine Tree in the local cemetery.



Professional software makes it possible for me to be present, via a computer, to tell my stories anywhere in the world. I won’t be there but my voice and photos will be, so it’s almost like I’m personally sharing my favorite stories with you or my relatives. Most people would rather see and hear a story than read it in a book. This technique makes it “real.”

Here’s how I created the story using hot spots:

1. Import the photo of the city map.
2. Create a sequence of hot spots to show the canal route.
3. Narrate and record a sound file for each hot spot.
4. Associate each sound file to a hot spot.
5. Add and associate a small photo thumbnail of the type of spiders hanging down under the bridge.
6. Save my work and have fun sharing the story with others.

## Tip - Use Sound and Photos

Clicking a narrated hot spot adds interest and realism to a story especially when the story is being told by the person who had the actual experience or first hand knowledge.

The hot spot sequence can be changed at any time. Use MP3 sound files, which are much smaller than WAV

## Use Audacity to Edit and Capture Sound

Consult pages 51-59 in the Digital Family History Guidebook for instructions about using Audacity to edit sound, create narrations and how to convert old cassette recordings.

# Example: Family History - The Martin Flat Dry Farm

*In the late 1800's, my grandfather and his three brothers traveled to southeastern Idaho to homestead some arid land in the foothills near Idaho Falls, Idaho (Eagle Rock).*

As a young boy, my interest in the “dry farm” increased after a trip to the dry farm when Grandpa Olsen introduced me to wheat gum. The “gum” was made by taking some wheat heads and rubbing them together in your hands while blowing the chaff away leaving the grain. I was then told to chew the wheat until it turned into “gum” which was really gluten. I remember thinking this pioneer gum wasn’t sweet or as nice tasting as the bubble gum I chewed all the time.

Many years later my interest in the old dry farm was rekindled while viewing some old photos belonging to my mother. Soon I was entrusted with many rare photos which were scanned into computer collections and promptly returned. I now have hundreds of Olsen photos waiting to have their stories shared with members of the Olsen family.

I was very excited the day an Olsen cousin brought me an original family document. It was so large that I had to use my digital camera and tripod to get a photo of this wonderful old Land Patent Deed. It’s interesting to use



Heritage Collector’s zoom tool to study the original signature of President Benjamin Harrison and see that it was signed 26 December 1890. That must have been a great Christmas present for W.C Olsen.

Homesteading was hard work with challenging living conditions as seen in this one surviving photo of the little dry farm home. All the Olsen family had to live together in this little home with the spiders, rattle snakes, mice and a leaking roof. They had to occupy the home for several summers in order to “prove up” or make improvements to fulfill the requirements of the Homestead Act.



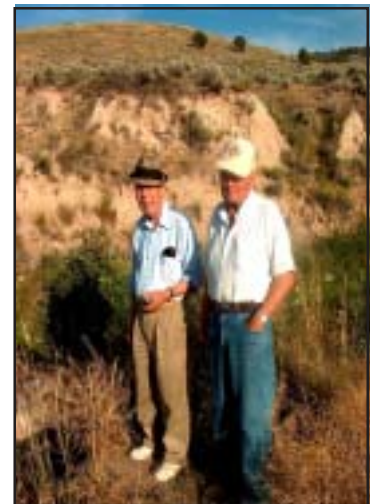
The Olsen brothers soon started the Martin Flat Dry Farm Company and began selling stock to purchase a 33 horsepower combine to harvest their crops and to make extra money harvesting the crops of their neighbors.

A few years ago, I talked my cousin into taking me on a safari to the Martin Flat Dry Farm. I was 6 years old the last time I visited the farm and could not find it on my own.

My cousin and his good friend told some fascinating stories about the dry farm. For example, the Olsen’s took their pigs up to the dry farm in summer. Pigs love to eat rattlesnakes reducing the number of snakes in the area lowering the chance of the Olsen children being struck by one of these poisonous snakes.

Grandpa Olsen was an avid fisherman who caught many large trout while fishing in the small creeks. Grandpa had a secret little “fishin’ hole” near the dry farm where he could fish and escape the heat. It’s called Willow Creek and is a very beautiful place.

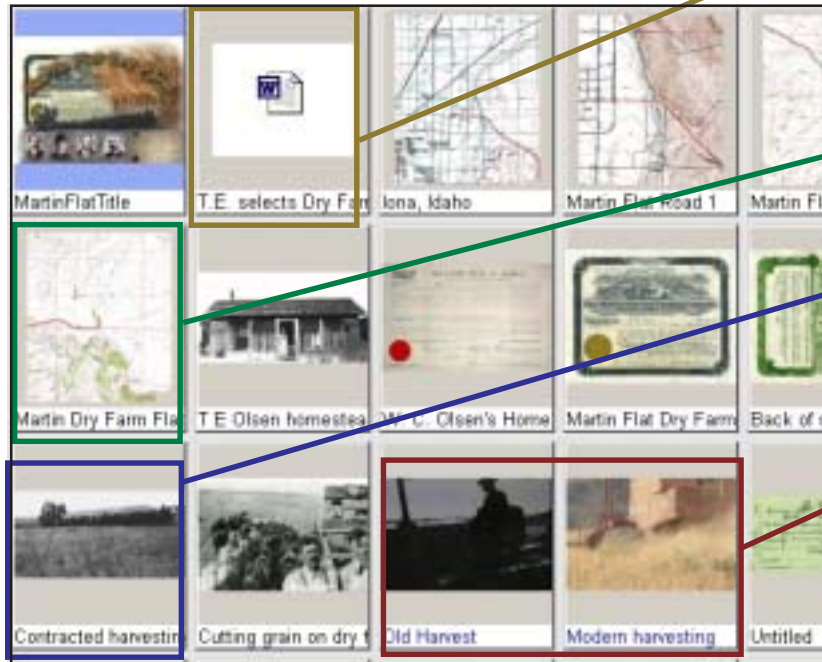
We traveled to the dry farm and to Willow Creek, took photos, video and recorded the GPS coordinates of his favorite little fishing hole and the Martin Flat Dry Farm so future generations will be able to visit these Olsen family history sites.



# The Making of the Martin Flat Dry Farm Collection

The Martin Flat Dry Farm collection was created to become a single, working repository for all available Martin Flat Dry Farm information. Photos, video clips, text documents, oral history audio, maps, and GPS coordinates were imported to the collection. New information can be easily added and shared with family.

## An Interactive Collection of Information and Stories



### Collection Files Types

- **Text Documents**  
Word - WordPerfect  
PDF, PowerPoint  
More Document Types
- **Topographical Maps**  
GPS Coordinates
- **Photos**  
Scanned  
Digital Camera  
Imported
- **Video Clips**  
Converted 8 mm video  
New Digital Video
- **Audio / Oral History**  
Narrated Recordings

With the click of a mouse button, photos display full screen, video clips play and come to life, ancestors are speaking to us via an oral history audio file. If the whim strikes, we can read, study or edit Olsen family text documents complete with photos.

### Each File Presents a Mini Story

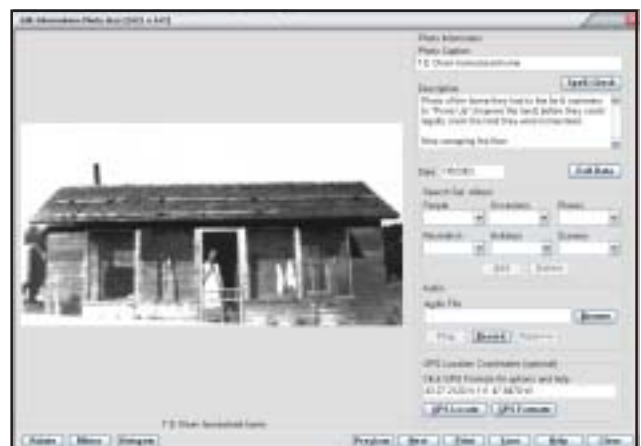
Right click on a thumbnail and select Edit Info to display the Professional database. You will see the photo caption, description, search sets, associated audio file, date of photo and GPS coordinates. Information is easily edited or updated.

### Completely Flexible

Our needs change. New or unexpected information may be added. All files within any collection may be copied or moved to other collections in the event you decide to subdivide or make one new collection from several smaller collections.

### Tip - Create sub collections

The Martin Flat Dry Farm collection is one of 15 collections within the Olsen Family Group of family history collections.



The Edit Info display for the Olsen Homestead Home

## The Storyteller's Mine Field



- ✓ If the story is boring to you - Surprise! *It will be boring to your audience.*
- ✓ Stories happen. Storytelling is an art not a science and takes careful planning.
- ✓ The only one that will enjoy your travelogue will be YOU!
- ✓ You can't have a story without some background facts.
- ✓ Short stories are better than long stories - snoring is not a compliment!
- ✓ Prepare and use an outline. Confusing the listener is never part of the plot.
- ✓ Don't talk us to death! Mix it up with photos, sound effects and graphics.
- ✓ Your children and family are interested in your stories even if you are not.
- ✓ Don't labor the story with elaborate facts. You will lose them before the end.
- ✓ Do what's best not what's easiest. There is no substitute for quality.
- ✓ Get feedback from people who will be honest with you - not patronizing.
- ✓ It's better to be embarrassed with a draft than a final copy or presentation.
- ✓ Billions of dollars are spent making movies about stories. You don't have to spend millions, just engage the minds of the people receiving your story.

### Making a Sideshow

Tell a story with photos if you don't want to write.

- ✓ Select a topic. An outline would be helpful.
- ✓ Find the photos. Select the photos for the story.
- ✓ Create a photo collection. Follow your outline and place all the photos into a collection.
- ✓ Fine tune the sequence. Make sure your story "flows" smoothly. Run the sideshow and change the order of the photos if necessary.

### Basic Requirements

#### Software

- Heritage Collector Database
- Word Processing Program
- Photo Enhancement
- Audio Editing
- Video Capture
- Windows Movie Maker

#### Hardware

- Tape Recorder
- Amplified Microphone
- VCR
- Capture Card\*
- DV Camcorder
- CD/DVD Writer

\* Not necessary if you use a new DV camcorder.

### Adding Sound

Narration greatly enhances any presentation.

- ✓ Create a script or read the story.
- ✓ Read script into an audio editing program.
- ✓ Cut down and edit sound files to save space.
- ✓ Associate sound files with photos.

### Copyrighted Material

Please remember the newsletters are copyrighted. If you would like to include a newsletter or excerpts in your newsletter or publication, please e-mail me for written permission.

Summarized from The Digital Family History Guidebook. Chapter 6, Interactive Storytelling - Getting Everyone Involved by Marlo E. Schuldt Copyright 2007-8