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# Put Your “Genealogy Stuff” in Book Form!

## Don't hide your research results in the closet

BY P. ROBERT WILLEY

If you are like me there probably are boxes of family documents and photographs stored in either your home or other family members' homes. They all may be long time forgotten. Nobody knows who many of the individuals are.

“What to do with this?” For thirty-eight years I have been collecting such items about our Swedish ancestors with the goal of someday organizing everything.

So about a year ago I made the decision to do what I had been postponing – looking through the albums, boxes, documents, old letters, etc. I began to organize the information into an interesting, readable book. When I began I knew this would be a challenge. What I did not realize nor understand were the many details involved in such a seemingly tedious but rewarding project.

### Unexpected consequences:

- \* Discovered previously unknown living family members who were eager to learn of their ancestors.
- \* Gained greater perspective of my childhood memories about family members.
- \* Identified deceased family members in letters, documents, and photographs whom I had never met and had little knowledge of.
- \* Family members reflected on events and sought additional information to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

### Some recommendations:

- \* Realize the task will take some time – in my case over a year of concentrated, almost daily work.
- \* Consider researching the history of the area during the times your ancestors lived there.
- \* Involve family members in the sharing of documents and photographs that you are considering using.
- \* Set a “target date for completion.” Be selective – you can't include everything. Accept that new information will always be found by you or family members and will thus enrich what already has been written.
- \* Have specific questions that are focused and clearly stated when you seek information from family members or other sources.
- \* Strive to lessen making erroneous assumptions from your research. Your book needs to make extensive use of footnotes and a comprehensive bibliography to identify sources. The goal is to present accurate information that can be easily substantiated.
- \* Weave into the text anecdotal information (historical events, family events, experiences, travel, and other stories, etc.).

- \* Submit “book drafts” for proof-reading to family members re accuracy, appropriateness, as well as seeing if it is interesting to a non-genealogist reader. Realize people's feelings and perceptions of events and experiences may vary a great deal. Once they see it in writing, family history takes on a more personal meaning.
- \* Seek professional advice re costs, editing, lay-out, and printing format. With today's technology it is amazing what can be done at reasonable cost.
- \* Consider donating copies to local genealogical or historical museums and societies, and send copies to family members.
- \* Upon completion of your book, submit an application to register your work at the *United States Copyright Office* to “protect authorship of original published or unpublished works.”  
<<http://www.copyright.gov/>>

There are additional guidelines or suggestions that could be listed but these have been the most useful for me to follow when researching and writing about our ancestors.

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