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Tucker, S.N.

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THE MOST PUBLIC OF ALL HISTORY: FAMILY HISTORY AND HERITAGE ALBUMS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF RECORDS

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties
ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
op donderdag 10 december 2009, te 12:00 uur

door

Susan Norris Tucker

Geboren te Mobile, Alabama, Verenigde Staten van Amerika
THE MOST PUBLIC OF ALL HISTORY:

FAMILY HISTORY

AND HERITAGE ALBUMS IN THE

TRANSMISSION OF RECORDS

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Mobile, Alabama, Verenigde Staten van Amerika
Promotiecommissie

Promotor: Prof. dr. F.C.J. Ketelaar

Overige leden: Prof. dr. J.F.T.M. van Dijck

Prof. dr. S. Leydesdorff

Prof. dr. R. Kroes

Prof. dr. F Weil

Dr. E. Yakel

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen
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THE MOST PUBLIC OF ALL HISTORY: FAMILY HISTORY AND HERITAGE ALBUMS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF RECORDS

Summary

Family History remains one of the most enduring cultural forms of recordkeeping. Its rich history has been shaped by education, religion, materials, technologies, gender, class, race, migration, and, fundamentally, access to records. Family history practitioners also hold a majority among all researchers in public repositories, making up from forty-five to ninety percent of all users who cross the literal or virtual portals of libraries and archives. Yet, archival science has devoted little attention to understanding the tasks and functions involved in documenting ancestors.

This dissertation seeks to correct that imbalance by exploring and interpreting influences and processes among people who practice genealogy (family historians who use primarily public records) and people who make scrapbooks (heritage album makers who use primarily oral accounts, private records, and family heirlooms). The two groups were specifically chosen in order that obvious ways of knowing the past—through written records accessible in repositories—and less obvious ways—through orally transmitted and privately held memory texts of various sorts—could be compared. The two groups were also chosen so that changing technologies could be studied as part of both a lived and an archival path to memories about families. To learn the context of such pursuits, an ethnographic approach was undertaken. Fifty-two people were interviewed and time was spent with family historians and album makers, primarily in Alabama and Louisiana. Among these people, the migrations of Acadians and Cajuns, African Americans, Sicilians, Croatians, and other ethnic backgrounds were also explored as motivations for studying family history. In addition, an historical perspective on gender and family-history keeping was interwoven in the study, and the opinions of family historians and album makers were sought in an exploration of the propensity of women to dominate the work of family recordkeeping.

Commonplace processes, theories on memory, and the mediation of memory in sundry individual and communal problems all were shown to be involved in family history. In the give-and-take among themselves, their legacies, and their movement between private and public sources, family historians and album makers were shown to demonstrate ways that public records are used and private records are created. This focus on records also illuminated conceptualizations of archives in general, and the means by which records are transmitted, especially as more and more people develop personal archives. The study then was cognizant of the transformations of environments where access to records and communication about records occur. Descriptions of these milieux,
these places and the work in these places, proved central to the study, as part of family history’s settings, a word chosen not only to tell about surroundings but also to suggest the overall crafting of communities of records. Overall, information was obtained about the ways in which family history is first approached and subsequently written, disseminated, and left to future generations (e.g., archivization, transmission, recontextualization, pluralization)—and the methods by which records, as intermediaries to the past, are used and created in everyday lives.

Two case studies, drawn from the interviews, illuminate these findings in-depth as the workings of collective memory by offering examples of the movement between public and private sources over time and space. These studies especially deal with the climate of memory for particular ethnicities in North America, and the online environment today which allows access to more and more records and which links individuals and ethnicities globally across cultural divides—past and present.

Taken as a whole, this work contributes new insights into those ideas that archivists share with others who use and create records. The study presents an expanded definition of the transmission of records, a broader understanding of archivization, and examples of simultaneously lived and archival approaches to learning the past. Family histories are demonstrated to be parts of a new world in which private archives influence the overall understanding of records and public history. These findings in turn are important to archival science in establishing educational priorities, new programs, and changing professional roles, especially as more and more records are shared between public and private archives.
GENEALOGIE EN FAMILIEALBUMS ALS DRAGERS VAN COLLECTIEVE HERINNERING

Samenvatting

Familiegeschiedenis is als vanouds één van de meest blijvende culturele vormen van archiveren. Haar rijke geschiedenis is gevormd door onderwijs, religie, informatie, technologieën, geslacht, klasse, ras, migratie en, fundamenteel, door toegang tot archieven. Onder alle gebruikers van openbare archieven zijn familiegeschiedenisonderzoekers in de meerderheid: zij zijn 45 tot 90 procent van alle gebruikers die de letterlijke of virtuele poorten van bibliotheken en archieven binnengaan. Toch heeft de archiefwetenschap weinig aandacht besteed aan het begrijpen van de taken en functies die het documenteren van voorouders met zich mee brengt.

Deze verhandeling wil deze onbalans corrigeren door processen en invloeden te onderzoeken en te interpreteren onder mensen die genealogie beoefenen (familiehistorici die voornamelijk openbare archieven gebruiken) en mensen die plakboeken maken (erfgoedalbummakers die voornamelijk gesproken relaizen, privé archieven en familiestukken gebruiken). De twee groepen werden met opzet gekozen zodat vergelijking mogelijk wordt tussen voor de hand liggende manieren om het verleden te leren kennen—door openbaar beheerde archieven—en minder voor de hand liggende manieren—door privé collecties van gesproken overgeleverde en vanuit herinnering opgeschreven teksten van allerlei soort. De twee groepen werden ook gekozen opdat veranderende technologieën bestudeerd konden worden als onderdeel van zowel de “levende”route naar herinneringen over families. Als die via het archief. Om de context van zulke bezigheden te leren kennen, werd een etnografische benadering gekozen. Tweeënvijftig mensen werden geïnterviewd en tijd werd doorgebracht met familiehistorici en albummakers, voornamelijk in Alabama en Louisiana. Onder deze mensen werden ook de motivatie om familiegeschiedenis te bestuderen onderzocht onder Acadians, Cajuns, Afrikaanse Amerikanen, Sicilianen, Kroaten en mensen van andere etnische achtergronden. Daarnaast werd een historisch perspectief op gender en familiegeschiedenis in de studie verweven en werden de meningen van familiehistorici en albummakers gevraagd in een onderzoek naar de neiging van vrouwen om in familiearchivering een dominante positie in te nemen.

Alledaagse processen, theorieën over het geheugen en de bemiddeling van het geheugen in allerlei individuele en gemeenschapsproblemen bleken allemaal betrokken te zijn bij familiegeschiedenis. Bij de uitwisseling van ideeën onder henzelf, hun nalatenschappen en het heen-en-weer gaan tussen privé bronnen en openbare bronnen bleken familiehistorici en albummakers werkwijzen te hanteren voor het gebruik van
openbare archieven en de creatie van particuliere archieven. Deze focus op archieven wierp ook licht op conceptualiseringen van archieven in het algemeen en de manier waarop archieven overgedragen worden, vooral omdat meer en meer mensen persoonlijke archieven vormen. De studie hield ook rekening met de transformaties van omgevingen waarin toegang tot archieven en communicatie over archieven voorkomen. Beschrijvingen van deze milieux, deze plaatsen en het werk op deze plaatsen, bleken het belangrijkst te zijn voor de studie als onderdeel van de setting van familiegeschiedenis, een woord dat niet alleen werd gekozen om over de omgeving te vertellen maar ook omdat ruimer verband de vorming van communities of records (gemeenschappen verbonden door archieven) voor te stellen. Al met al werd informatie verkregen over de manieren waarop familiegeschiedenis voor het eerst benaderd wordt en vervolgens geschreven, verspreid en aan toekomstige generaties nagelaten wordt (bijv. archivarisering, transmissie, recontextualisering, pluralisering)—en de methoden waarmee archieven als bemiddelaars met het verleden gebruikt worden en in het leven van alledag gecreëerd worden.

Twee case studies, afgeleid van de interviews, verhelderen en verdiepen al deze bevindingen als de werking van het collectief geheugen, door voorbeelden te bieden van het heen- en weer gaan tussen openbare en privé bronnen door tijd en ruimte heen. Deze studies gaan vooral over het “geheugenklimaat” voor bepaalde etniciteiten in Noord-Amerika en in de online wereld van vandaag die toegang tot meer en meer archieven toelaat en waarin individuen en etniciteiten wereldwijd door culturele scheidslijnen heen zijn verbonden — in verleden en heden.

Over het geheel genomen, biedt dit werk nieuwe inzichten in die opvattingen die archivarislen delen met anderen die archieven gebruiken en creëren. De studie presenteert een meer uitgebreide definitie van de transmissie van archieven, een breder begrip van archivarisering en voorbeelden van het leren kennen van het verleden door tegelijkertijd de “levende”route en de archiefweg te wandelen. Van familiegeschiedenissen wordt aangetoond dat ze tot een nieuwe wereld behoren waarin privé archieven het totale begrip van archieven en het begrip van geschiedenis beïnvloeden. Deze bevindingen zijn op hun beurt belangrijk voor de archiefwetenschap, als basis voor prioriteiten in het onderwijs, nieuwe programma’s en veranderende professionele rollen, vooral omdat meer en meer archiefstukken gedeeld worden door de openbare en de privé sfeer gezamenlijk.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Anna cannot remember a time in her eighty years when she did not collect family history.¹ She tells of this practice in a voice that holds French intonation, occasional Southern expressions, and what most Americans usually associate (incorrectly) with Brooklyn, New York nasal sounds. Like this New Orleans accent, her belongings and her activities are embodied legacies in various forms. For example, in what she calls her “memory room,” she discusses choosing the pattern of her chintz curtains to imitate the curtains of a seamstress aunt. In other explanations too, ancestors always figure: their recipes are her recipes; their holidays are not so different than her own; this grandchild today is named for this deceased uncle; and her errands involve routes chosen so as to see neighborhoods where relatives once lived. Almost every day she spends time sorting, labeling, transcribing, and writing about letters, certificates, paintings, artifacts, and other memorabilia. At night, she cuts and pastes some of these items into heritage albums, scrapbooks designed to hold family history. Here are photocopied pages of handwritten registers and bible entries showing births and deaths, small textile pieces and photos of embroidered samplers, receipts of family businesses, marriage licenses, and photographs

¹ Anna’s name here is a pseudonym. All other family historians and album makers in this project, unless given last names, are also identified by pseudonyms.
of first communions. Here are parts of book jackets, movie ticket stubs, and other ephemera, which stand as reminders of her participation in particular moments in local and national culture. Besides her memory work at home, once a month she makes scrapbooks in groups with other women.

Her forty-nine-year-old cousin Joseph also practices family history, but in so many ways his boundaries of genealogical culture are at once wider and more remote than those of Anna. For learning about the past, he uses libraries and archives to find records that were created originally for the business of governments, churches, schools, and other organizations. For years, he spent every lunch hour and every Saturday with these sources. He also worked in consultation with other men and women in genealogical interest groups where together they developed expertise about records. Joseph came to know much about birth certificates, marriage licenses, and death certificates; probate and land records; pages from city directories; maps of Louisiana, and German and French towns. In the use of these publicly held and usually publicly created sources, his work differs from that of Anna and her privately held, often privately created sources. However, some of what he calls “my documents” or “my originals” can be found in photocopies placed in her memory room and heritage albums. Except for these records shared with Anna or other records scanned and saved to a laptop computer, all his materials were lost in the New Orleans flood following hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Goals and Definitions

This study explores the practices of Anna, Joseph, and others like them. The two main questions posed are simple ones: “What circumstances lead to an interest in family records?” and “What does work with these records involve?” From the answers to these
questions one learns characteristics of memory practitioners and the types of sources they use; the relationships of the material and electronic tools of recordkeeping to knowledge about families passed between generations; the assignment of particular social roles to particular people as memory keepers; and the influences of migration on motivations to keep family history.

For all these common activities the terms “family history” and “genealogy” are used interchangeably. The former term, however, is a newer one (sometimes called “the new genealogy”) and is used primarily to define a more embracive practice encompassing attention to the context of lives as much as the names on family trees and pedigree charts. As in the comparison between Anna and Joseph, album makers labor with family history but not in quite the same way that family historians do: album makers utilize oral accounts and primarily private records, while family historians use both private and public records. In order that comparisons can be made between these and other varying sources, methods, and characteristics, the terms and categories “album makers” and “family historians” are deliberately observed and utilized.

The older meanings of genealogy itself are central to both groups. From the Greek genea meaning “family” and logos meaning “discourse” or “knowledge,” genealogy is “a universal phenomenon and, in forms varying from the rudimentary to the comparatively complex,” is a centuries-old practice. The simple desire to possess

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information about those from whom one descends has fueled generations of people who compile lists of ancestors. Genealogy, then, is one of the most enduring yet simultaneously changing forms of recordkeeping throughout time. Yet the structures and places of learning to know ancestors alter under the influence of social and educational practices, religion, new materials, and new technologies.

The types of people involved in this evolution have also changed over time. Today, Anna is considered an outsider to the mainstream of family history since most of her work is completed at home and in the homes of others. This insider vs. outsider status reflects on earlier societies where genealogical records proved land rights and one’s place in a hierarchical society. Such records were, in almost every case, greater in size in the grand houses of the nobility than in the homes of the peasants and the middle class. Ownership of records and an interest in access to records shifted slowly to more people as literacy spread, as improved print technologies made for more records, and as legal and legislative changes made the government accountable to citizens. Today, genealogical records hold other types of power, or what could be called, “cultural capital,” i.e., the benefits of connections provided average people to the inscribed past, connections to their own identities as chosen from the past, and connections to one another in the present.

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Genealogical research is considered as being based upon “oral traditions and documentary sources” with the latter far outweighing the former.\(^9\) There is a sort of balance between the two, however, since family historians are told to begin with interviews of family members, their oral accounts, and private records.\(^{10}\) In this respect, one could consider both oral and written sources as “memory texts,” a term conveying the fact that material objects, records, and spoken accounts function together with tools of reading, writing, and technology to produce documentary sources.\(^{11}\) Drawing from ideas of a number of scholars interested in social or collective memory, this study will show how the mediation of various actor-networks are marshaled not only to reflect the past but also to conform to the present and move towards the future, to shift between public and private spaces, and to mediate and structure different forms of memory and daily practices.\(^{12}\)

In all family history work, there is a continuum of transmission of records, and a mixture of, and movement between, private and public records. Understanding this dynamic is dependent on exploring a broad definition of records as always in the process of being re-interpreted, as moving actors in collectively-held and collectively-negotiated

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\(^{10}\) See, for example, Arlene Eakle and Johni Cerny, eds., *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Pub., 1984), and also subsequent editions in 1997 and 2006.


representations of the past. Family history thus can be seen as an evolving process in which various interactions remake collective memory.

Memories’ Practices, Memories’ People

Album makers and family historians are representative of a “situated knowledge.” They produce various memory texts, they pass these on, and they follow certain rules and conventions in doing so. Their work involves present activities and, more, present-mindedness about the past alongside access to records of the past. Pierre Nora’s assertion that “modern memory is first of all archival” is certainly found among family historians and album makers. However, so too is something Nora held to be untrue, which is that memory is also experienced in equal fashion from what he calls “within.” Anna’s explanation of choices in fabric, names, recipes, and geography comes from within herself, from things learned in her family. Other album makers and family historians also achieve some middle ground between the “spontaneous” lived milieu of memory and the lieux of memory, between the places where memory is lived in language choices and other habits and institutions, and where memory is sought in “vestiges” that are sanctioned as proof and “symbolic of the memorial heritage.”

This in-between of a living and archival memory is found in the accounts of the family historians and album makers (told in Chapters Five, Six and Seven). From these

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people, one learns how various constituents (governments recording vital statistics, organizations tracking members, people holding records, and seekers of these records) come together to allow family history. Where does this coordination come from? Since the late nineteenth century, groups interested in family history have become progressively more inclusive, allowing coordination to begin with people like Anna and Joseph, who would be defined in the world of popular culture as “hobbyists,” but who are actually in many cases, more serious than this name makes them sound. Here the important point is that they work as private individuals who yet define their work as shared. This collectivity is also shaped by other types of individuals and groups. Joining people like Anna and Joseph are beginners, professional genealogists, Mormons, archivists, librarians, digital album makers, and workers in various commercial firms—with many of these people occupying more than one category. Together they are all significant players who complement one another to make a lived and an archival world of family history work, sharing and giving to one another and future generations. They do so because the customs of genealogy, more often than not, have been created around communal efforts. While there are hierarchies of skills and backgrounds, the practice of family history largely begins with an ethos of circulation and exchange.

Alongside a lived and archival memory, collectivity also concerns the idea that the legacy of the past should be created in accumulations. People like Anna and Joseph are the starting point for a belief that the individual contributes various little pieces to the

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19 Following the vocabulary of family historians, the terms “the Latter Day Saints” and “Mormons” are preferred in this study, though the actual name of this religious denomination is the “Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.”

heap of facts that will be added to the “mountain of names.” Their shared work makes for a “community of records.” This term “community of records” or, others like it (a “mnemonic community,” an “interpretive community,” a “community of memory”) can easily be applied to reflect upon the mutual efforts, the sharing, and ultimately, the formation of collective memory. A community of records is framed within the wide definitions of the records that it creates, a definition that embraces not only written documentation but also the many forms of remembrance and recording that include oral traditions, public ceremonies, commemorations, artifacts, and markers such as public statues and private grave sites.

The public and private realms nurture this frame and create a positioning in which the use of public and private records in tandem is expected.

How are their gatherings transmitted? Joseph shares with Anna a similar accent and some common ancestors, but his “memory room,” the place where he would store his materials is sparsely furnished with two chairs, one sofa, and one desk—all new in 2007. The walls are bare. Asked if he once had a memory room, he pauses and then says, “No, not in the way Anna does.” He had photographs, of course, and many filing cabinets,

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25 As will be shown in later chapters, manuals on family history almost always begin by instructing beginners to start with what is known—with private, usually oral accounts.
26 No citations are used when quoting from interviews.
and he “loved” the “collecting” of records. “Knowing the city through genealogy took up every lunch hour for years,” he says. It is knowing the city he emphasizes as he continues:

Example, here was this great influx of people, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant. They lived in the Irish Channel, called it that. See this picture Anna had framed for me this Christmas. That’s the three red-headed Irish-French sisters on the steps—Catholic—with one of the Jewish boys of the neighborhood. She married him. I went looking for those kinds of people but I found that kind of city.

He could be understood as discussing modernity with its movement of peoples and focus on progress, or postmodernity with its liberal understanding of many truths. He could be discussing the multicultural city that then yielded a diversity of records forms and practices, that would shape how collective memory was at first possible. He could also be reflecting on the processes of various forms of transmission creating collective memory, of “mnemohistory.” Yet, only in the gesture of the hand, a pointing of the finger, is the sister who married the boy made known. In addition, the photograph is black and white but he has spoken of “the red-headed sisters.” He annotates the picture; it cannot become a story told without his narration. As Martha Langford suggests about the organization of photograph albums, such conversational details preserve “the structures of oral tradition for new uses in the present.”

Joseph recalls images from materials lost in the 2005 flooding:


I don’t think I will return to get them, go back to the libraries and the courthouses and the state archives, but I could…. It’s comforting to know they are there and that I could go back and redo all the work I had done. At least, now it seems comforting, before it just seemed so sad.

In this loss, he understands on a deep level one of the purposes of archives: that they safeguard the representations of past actions.

Anna’s albums do not have this same sort of accessibility or protection. They are not available “in the lunch hours at the public library” or via formalized rights to materials. They are not duplicated, though now with digital and photo duplication possible and in reaction to the danger of hurricanes, she does consider a need for copies. Yet, they are, these heritage albums and her work, part of a wider world than is first apparent, part of a long tradition of private recordkeeping that allows a preservation of various accounts that stand as part of, and opposite to, official versions of the past. While the very name of “heritage” suggests an inherent traditionalism, the albums can also be seen as providing alternate views, and of becoming small revolutionary acts. They preserve a culture that Todd Steven Gernes found among nineteenth-century women in their use of “ingenuity, dialogue, and folkways of handicraft constructionism,” which was more or less replaced by an academic discourse that looked down on creations in scrapbooks.30 As Dale Spender found in her examination of the structuring of the English language by the patriarchy, these women scrapbook makers have been placed outside what is normally transmitted as knowledge:

The dichotomy of male/female, public/private is maintained by permitting women to write for private audiences (which can be extended to encompass other women) but discouraging them from writing for a public audience, that is, men. In the

private sphere, women have been permitted to write for themselves (for example, diaries) and for each other.\textsuperscript{31}

Women album makers and most family historians remained in the twentieth century and even today “outsiders” to the established world of knowledge. They were amateurs denied entrance to the academy. As Beth Davis-Brown and Richard Harvey Brown note about what they call “free intellectuals”:

\begin{quote}
[B]etween them and the knowledge workers who claim the titles of curator, archivist, librarian, or director ... there runs a symbolic and material border, a line that divides the orthodox representatives of knowledge and memory from the non-orthodox and unauthorized speakers.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

This dividing line was rooted in the privileging of “secular national memory” over “sacred tribal memory.” In this progression, “History” (with a capital H) came to be preferred over “family and clan histories.” “Modern archives, libraries and museums,” which Emile Durkheim saw as necessary, were made “to constitute the collective sense of moral solidarity”\textsuperscript{33} to hold this national memory. Album makers and family historians came to serve other functions. Album makers followed a path not unlike that which Bonnie Smith observed in women writers of historical fiction, biography, and travel accounts: they “articulated liminality that worked to mark out the boundaries, spaces, and locations of femininity.”\textsuperscript{34} In other words they came to focus on women’s history. One part of this history was women’s care of the family

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 19; Ian Robertson, “Emile Durkheim,” in \textit{Encyclopedia of Sociology} (Guilford, CT: Duskin Publishing Group, 1974), 92.
\textsuperscript{34} Bonnie G. Smith, \textit{The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 165.
record. Male family historians, as well, came to embody “a genre of recollection,” 35 underlying but very much outside the larger academic history.

Yet, in the preferences and origins of both the academy and the amateur’s realms, private memory remained, however obscured. It became a seamless part of the public memory and history, in many cases its base, but one positioned so as to be, at times, invisible. 36 As Penelope Papailias notes,

Precisely those qualities that discredit the products of these independent labors in the eyes of professional historians—their blatant partiality, sentimental tone, verbosity, and outdated or inconsistent methodologies—testify to the availability of history as a discourse on the self as well as the tremendous investment that people have made in documenting and witnessing a past that they—or others—consider their “own.” 37

This obscurity of private record keepers is complicated by what is sometimes seen as a schism between records and manuscripts, collecting libraries and archives. In the division between the historic manuscript and public archives traditions 38 come questions about the nature of public and private records themselves. Pertinent here is the

36 Bonnie G. Smith, The Gender of History, 10. Manuals on family history begin with the private records, for example, one chapter among ten to twenty on public records. See, for example, various editions of The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy.
37 Papailias, Genres of Recollection, 2.
perspective that documents created “for a purpose in themselves” are not records. On the other hand, there exists another interpretation of private documentary forms as very much transactions of the self, records that are “evidence of me” or “the site of multiple constructs—of a person upholding and struggling with ideas, of self and of others, while simultaneously contradicting, convincing, and contriving.”

This project takes the latter belief, arguing that albums form parts of private and personal archives, and increasingly, public history. Deliberately albums are not seen as collections, though collecting habits and the ways some scholars have thought of them as collections are considered. Rather, the album makers are participants in technologies shaping home and public archives; in sharing what they create, and in using accessible records, they partake in shaping public history. They are participants in what Papailias names as part of the distinction between historical product and historical production.

Heritage albums, in the spectrum of family history work, can also be considered a prototype of a record in that they are often the first account, sometimes the only account, of various life events. As such, they are important to understanding subsequent negotiations shaping archives and collective memory.

The word “heritage” has its own complexity, reflecting on the heritage movement of the late twentieth century. Heritage is no longer restricted to what one inherits as an individual or a family but has expanded to include the legacies of national and local

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43 Papailias, *Genres of Recollection*, 16.
landmarks, and other features marking the past. Heritage, like collective or social memory, concerns interactions among personal, community, and social memory. An interest in the past evoking the word “heritage” is played out as a form of public history (although not without controversy) in historical theme parks, commemorative exhibits in museums, and films. Heritage albums represent this movement in microcosm, a part of a populist history shaped by a consumer culture. But with new technology, the album makers also shape this culture, creating their private and public versions of the larger history of families and nations. Heritage albums were popularized in the 1990s by scrapbookers, who defined these particular scrapbooks as any handmade or unique-to-its-maker book (thus accommodating electronically produced albums) with genealogical information, as well as other materials documenting events, institutions, and organizations. In such books, “stories, people, traditions, and keepsakes of ancestry” could be joined.

Heritage albums have a genealogy of their own, discussed in Chapter Three, but briefly here placed within the progression from the tablets of antiquity, to commonplace books, to the album amicorum, to scrapbooks, to photo albums, and now, to many digitally-born forms. Anna does not know this progression but she knows that as a child she created scrapbooks in recycled ledgers, in Sears’ catalogs, or upon “whatever piece of

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paper she could find and sew together.” Her childhood habits of recordkeeping, like her work today, rested on technological improvements, the availability of print and paper, her skills as a reader and what might be called a poacher or a gleaner of the materials.

Joseph’s observations also allow insight into an environment that made for wishing to find materials to help him know the past. He began because he did not know his father. Family history allowed him first to place himself in proximity to some aspect of his father’s life, and then, by surprise, took him to knowledge about the past in general. The maps of European towns and villages symbolized to him the genetic material he himself carried and that brought his father an early death—the migration, one might say, of a living (and in this case, dying) inheritance.

Like Joseph’s father’s absence, genealogy always has concerned loss: the threat of lost property if ancestry could not be documented, the memorialization of the dead so that family honor could be inscribed in stone, or in some other form to mark a life lived amidst the constancy of death. The progression of Joseph’s interest from the personal to the communal is not unusual; it illustrates the fluid movement between private and public realms, between heritage and history. Genealogy in general promotes an identification with the immeasurable backlog of the dead, and the immeasurable future of those yet to be born. As one family historian said, “After a while there are no names, but you know

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they are there, and who are they but just people? Even the ones you have the names on, well that may be all you have, so you have to look for the bigger picture to even begin to understand them.”

Women and Men

Neither Joseph nor Anna is unusual among memory practitioners. Yet Joseph, being a man, represents neither the stereotype of a family historian (who is a woman) nor the majority of those people who are most actively involved in genealogy (who are women). The predominance of women among family historians follows a long history. Since medieval times, women have overtly and tacitly overseen family memories. They have coordinated the memorialization of the dead, told stories of the past to the young, connected generations by other tangible and symbolic gifts of the family, and welcomed newcomers by allowing insight into the family. Set parallel to this assignment were the

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learned men who, from the priesthood of the middle ages to the late nineteenth-century antiquarians, controlled publicly inscribed genealogical efforts, relying on women and private memories but also setting them apart.\(^5^4\)

As suggested in the earlier quote by Dale Spender, other scholars have shown how the “formidable legal, moral, and social structures, reinforced by countless images and texts, reified the private, not the public, sphere as the ‘natural’ milieu for all classes of women.”\(^5^5\) In this assignment, women for centuries were denied access to or discouraged from accessing publicly held records. A legacy of this barrier was that membership in the early historical and genealogical societies was out of the question for women, and the reading rooms of the first truly public places holding records were restricted to men.\(^5^6\) In short, a “gendered history”\(^5^7\) created a world where men were considered the public spokespeople, and women, the private spokespeople, for the past.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the private role of women as family record keepers was transformed by the founding of sex-segregated patriotic societies, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and by the slow but continuing welcoming of women within the male-dominated genealogical and historical

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societies. In these latter groups, women became the workers, rather than the leaders, or the secretaries rather than the presidents, but they became very visible public stewards of the past.

Within the National Genealogical Society (NGS, established 1903), early presidents, with some exceptions, were men, but other leadership roles were shared, thus creating a rare community. This sharing of leadership among men and women also has remained. In 2008, on the thirteen-person board of this group, men number six, and women seven, with top leadership positions all falling to women (Vice-President, Secretary and Past President), a ratio also even unusual today among organizations in the U.S. A count of genealogists who have been authorized by the Board for Certification of Genealogists shows that women far outnumber men. Among certified genealogists, for example, in the areas studied on this project, four women and no men are listed as professional genealogists.

**Family History’s Numbers**

Despite this gendered history, genealogy has been called “the most public of all history, an endeavor known in almost all families.” Whereas many families might visit a museum or a library, most people first learn the past from within the family. A 1995 survey by Maritz Marketing Research showed that over forty-five percent of American adults, or 87.5 million people were interested in genealogy and almost 14 million of these

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people were involved “a great deal in family history.”62 In the late 1990s, a study in the journal *American Demographics* found that genealogy held some interest to as many as 113 million people.63 *Time Magazine* named the pursuit of family history as one of the four most popular topics on the Internet in a 1999 cover article.64 Among the most active websites, FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com report hundreds of thousands of daily users.65 In one month in 2007, Media Matrix found that Ancestry.com had over 2.5 million unique site visitors viewing over 200 million pages, and over 825,000 paid subscribers.66 While some people dispute these numbers,67 the most authoritative uncontested pronouncement is one that states simply that genealogy is a very popular pastime in the United States.68


66 Jan Alpert, President of the National Genealogical Society (NGS), email to author, April 16, 2008.

67 Dick Eastman, “How Popular is Genealogy?” *Eastman’s Online Genealogy Newsletter*, January 11, 2006, http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2006/01/how_popular_is_.html (accessed April 10, 2008). Eastman notes that other countries with smaller populations attracted more people to genealogy conferences. The annual Family History Show in London typically attracted 2,500 to 3,000 attendees; the Biennale de Généalogie in Paris in December 2004 attracted more than 20,000 attendees; and the smaller Congrès de la Fédération Française de Généalogie hosted annually in different cities in France always attracts 3,000 to 5,000 French men and women. In U.S. national conferences on family history, attendees number only 1,500 or 1,600 persons. In addition, Eastman compares the dollars spent on sports magazines, for example, as far surpassing the money spent on genealogical magazines.

68 Alpert (email to author, April 16, 2008) stated that the Association of Professional Genealogists includes over 1,800 professional genealogists; the Board for Certification of Genealogists has certified over 300 genealogists; NGS has approximately 10,000 individual members and more than 675 organizational members including local, state and regional genealogical societies and local and state libraries; and the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) has more than 650 member societies. FGS believes their combined membership is over 1 million individuals interested in genealogy. The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) includes 75 member organizations representing 10,000 individuals.
Within archives and libraries, family history researchers often make up the largest user group. Most studies show that family historians make up from forty-five to ninety percent of all archival researchers. Though statistical breakdowns about the types of users are not routinely collected or made available, most archivists believe that the numbers of family history researchers have grown in the last thirty years and will continue to grow. In 2007, the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C., estimated that 80 percent of the users in their microfilm reading rooms were genealogists. The Alabama Department of Archives and History reported eighty-nine percent of their users were family historians in 2008. The Louisiana State Archives similarly reports that “80 to 90 percent” of users are genealogists. Almost two thousand people per day visit the Family History Library in Salt Lake City; in 2008, this meant some 600,000 visitors per day.}

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71 Diane L. Dimkoff, Microfilm Reading Room Monthly Totals, email to author, March 16, 2007.

72 Nancy Dupree, Senior Archivist, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery Alabama, telephone conversation, April 15, 2009. Alabama reported use by some 13,846 people with 12,342 of these being family historians in 2008.

73 Bill Stafford, Director of Reference Services, Louisiana Secretary of State, Archives Division, email to author, April 15, 2009.
year. In addition, over six million visitors yearly use the more than 4,500 Latter Day Saints’ local family history libraries around the world.

Writing of the U.S. in 1992, John J. Grabowski found that genealogists were “the fastest growing group of researchers in many repositories.” He listed use at the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) in Cleveland, Ohio, as 151 percent more than it had been ten years previously, “most of this growth … genealogical in nature....

Approximately 75 percent of the people using the WRHS library on any given day are pursuing family history research.” Similarly he found that “the bulk of research use with local governmental records” rested with “genealogists.” This growth among family historians as users has continued, though many of the new users access portals via the Internet.

**Album Makers’ Numbers**

Heritage album makers are considered a subset within family historians. They form only one of the 600 categories listed on *Cyndi’s List of Genealogical Sites* on the Internet. In some respects, they are on the farthest boundaries of the interest in family history, often never attached to any organized group studying genealogy. Among the heritage album makers studied for this project, twenty-five of twenty-six interviewees were self-taught in genealogy. They make their heritage albums usually either alone or

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among women who are engaged in making scrapbooks of all types. They see themselves and their work as part of a community of memory-making. Studying them, one learns how records are used and created outside the archives.

Album makers’ practices are also considered here for comparative purposes as one looks at varying methods of transmitting memories and shaping collective memories. Over twenty-five million persons in the U.S. consider themselves to be scrapbookers, with one million of these being men, and the rest women. Thus they form an even more clearly gendered grouping than do family historians.

Thirty percent of all U.S. households are said to hold one scrapbook maker. One industry report suggests that scrapbook makers are 98% female, 85% Caucasian, and 63% married with children living at home. According to the Hobby Industry Association and to album makers themselves, scrapbooking remains one of the most popular hobbies of the early twenty-first century. Indeed album making is an industry unto itself. Its 2.6 billion dollar income in 2007 made news in the scrapbooking blog, *Life Preservers Scrapbook Club.* At the other end of the world of publishing, the *Wall Street Journal* also found impressive that:

*From 1998 to 2004, scrapbooking grew from a $350 million minor hobby fueled by mom-and-pop stores to a $2.6 billion business with goods in big-box stores*

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and crafting chains like Archiver’s and ReCollections, with products like $14.99 color-coordinated papers by Die Cuts with a View and $12.95 “goodie box” stickers by Doodlebug Design.\(^8^3\)

An interest in genealogy is almost routinely cited as one of the reasons for the beginning of scrapbooking’s popularity, with the 1976 publication of the Alex Haley’s novel and the 1977 television series *Roots*, appearing as a marker on timelines.\(^8^4\) About 75 percent of scrapbook manufacturers are based in Utah,\(^8^5\) which is not surprising, given the role genealogy plays in religious life there, and the need to place family history in some form that allows display. On the other hand, the most often discussed of the vendors of albums is Creative Memories, a Minnesota-based direct sales company that recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary.\(^8^6\)

While all scrapbookers do not make heritage albums, heritage album makers very much live within the world of this popular craft. Heritage albums are considered one of the most important of all scrapbooks to make.\(^8^7\) This emphasis is promoted by the religious right, and Mormonism in particular, which perceive women as guardians of the home.\(^8^8\) Such views are essentialist ones, dividing the sexes along strictly defined lines, yet album makers, also, discuss their domains of memory as equivalent to, or preferred over, existing authorized (often male, as they see it) versions of the past.

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\(^8^3\) Crow, “Scrapbook Industry Woos Male Crafters.”


\(^8^5\) Crow, “Scrapbook Industry Woos Male Crafters.”

\(^8^6\) Ibid.

\(^8^7\) Lightle and Anderson, *The Creative Memories*, 139.

Introduction to the Chapters

The chapters that follow elaborate on the above themes and tell more about family historians, album makers, and their memory practices. Chapter Two concerns the social world that creates family history. Borrowing from the domesticity of the private albums and the hierarchical functions initially served by genealogy, the layers of memories, practices, and meanings are detailed in this chapter to explore the transmission, recontextualization, and pluralization of records by family history.

Chapter Three introduces an American history of family history, and the various forms it has taken, including the album. The writings consulted address the types of knowledge people have had and have today in order that they may use and create records about families.

Chapter Four, entitled “Research Design and Methodology,” gives information on ethnographic work in general and the specific groups and individuals studied in particular. Fieldwork, archival research, and in-depth interviewing were all a part of this work. Participant-observation, along with textual analysis, offered preparation for fifty-two interviews.

Chapter Five, “Family Historians,” and Chapter Six, “Heritage Album Makers,” present the findings from these interviews. Here are descriptions of the two groups of record keepers, the processes of their work; their choices in words, practices, and communities; their motivations; and their movement between public and private records and recordkeeping.

Chapter Seven, “The Transmission and Pluralization of Records,” explores the workings of collective memory by offering two examples of the movement between
public and private sources over centuries. This section also considers the ongoing negotiation of memory in time and space and its dynamic function in the lives of various groups.

Chapter Eight, the conclusion, answers Barbara Reed’s question, “What is an archival role in shaping collective memory,” by describing possible roles archives holding family history records could adopt in service to researchers and society. Future topics of study are also suggested.

**Limits and Contributions of the Study**

Learning family history is often thought of as a gift, and so too is writing what has been learned about this memory practice. Attendant upon any such sharing, however, are restrictions of time, space, and cost. The first limitation here is one of geography: this study focuses on the practice of recordkeeping in the United States and the lived experiences of family history, primarily in Louisiana and Alabama. The second limitation is one of discipline, restricting the main analysis of the study to the framework of archival science.

The value of these restrictions is a greater focus on named and explored processes concerned with records. In the give-and-take among themselves, their legacies, and their movement between private and public sources, family historians and album makers demonstrate ways that public records are used and private records are created. This focus on records also illuminates conceptualizations of archives in general, and the means by which records are transmitted. The study then is cognizant especially of the transformations of environments where access to records and communication about

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records occur. The description of these *milieux*, these places and the work in these places, is central to the study. They are considered as part of family history’s settings, a word chosen not only to tell about surroundings but also to suggest the overall crafting of cultures, here of communities of records.

Taken as a whole, this exploration contributes new insights into those ideas that archivists share with others who use and create records. For Anna and Joseph, with whom this chapter began, recordkeeping and records’ use are influenced by gender and migration. Yet these attributes have rarely been studied in relation to archival work.  

Similarly, knowing the work of people like Anna and Joseph adds another dimension to previous studies that have found “two players,” involved in the use of records, one who is the political player using records as “symbolic assets” and the other who is a professional, with a goal of “cultural capital.” This work argues for a third player, one who has remained positioned, but obliquely so, as the foundation of public history. In investigation of the memory practices of this latter “player,” the study then also adds to what is known about archival use, and presents a model for others who wish to focus on the theory and practice of recordkeeping outside the walls of the archives.

People like Anna and Joseph are the starting point on the journeys of so many others into the past. It is time now that their access to this past is understood.


CHAPTER TWO

LAYERS OF MEMORIES, PRACTICES, AND MEANINGS

With a Middle Western American family, no sooner do you begin to perceive the extent of the proliferation of ancestors backward into time than they are lost from sight. Every trace of them disappears, through the simple erosion of human forgetfulness. They were in movement in a new country. The women were committed to drudgery and died young. The men had no proper tools to farm with, and weren’t good farmers anyway.... With their minds always on some promised land, like the Old Testament figures they so much resembled, they did not bother to record or even remember the place of their origin.

In my Grandmother Maxwell’s scrapbook, under the heading “Maxwell Fuller’s Own Grandfather,” there is an account of his life, in her handwriting. It is maddening. She must have known something about his early years, but what she put down is what she found in print (as if that alone was dependable) in a history of Logan County, published in 1886.

Most of the things I would like to know, my father could have told me [but].... He did not like to be interrupted in the middle of his narrative.¹

Like these above words, this project considers processes of omissions, inclusions, desires. This three-sided framework concerns the accumulations of records or the “layers” of records over time, which, in turn make new records, and the people and technologies that make them. In this chapter, first discussed is this choice of the word “layers” used by album makers and family historians to reflect upon their accumulations of records, as well as more subtle distinctions they make in the hierarchy of who can

know the past, and what past is known. Considered next are layers of recordkeeping within archivistics and other fields, and a review of readings showing different perspectives on family history and album making. Included here are definitions of transmission, recontextualization, and pluralization—the latter two forming the larger definition of the first to make possible the transfer of records from archives to person, person to person, or in any number of other directions as legacies to future generations.

Thirdly considered are influences that have shaped the accessibility of family history records at different times by different people: available technologies, levels of expertise, gender roles, and migration. Finally considered are social practices that are shaped around the creation of particular kinds of family histories.

Why introduce family historians and album makers through such considerations?

Because family history is shaped by a desire to remember, and because “layer,” a “layering,” or “multi-layered” processes are persistent metaphors among those who work with memory. Freud’s choice of layers, the remaining trace on the “mystic writing pad,” is often called forth.² So too are other compelling deployments of the layers of memories.³ In archival science, Jeannette Bastian speaks of the need to see many layers, to uncover layers, and to draw parallels between layers.⁴ Verne Harris urges “the peeling back of layers,” within his argument that “interrogation of the file is about context—

³ Paul Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 84, 208, 212, 258; Draaisma, Metaphors of Memory, 7, 8, 9, 21, 27, 45, 103, 111, 190, 202; Schudson, Watergate in American Memory, 217; van Dijck, Mediated Memories, 5.
⁴ Jeannette Allis Bastian, “Placing Archives in the Memory Continuum: Remembering The Homestead Strike of 1892,” The First International Conference on the History of Records and Archives: Conference Programme and Participants’ Papers (Toronto: Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto, 2003), 86.
context to the text which the researcher reads in the file. Any reading of the text without this accompanying peeling back of layers of intervention and interpretation will be deeply flawed.” In a rich statement, metaphoric in its own layering, Harris emphasizes that “Here, precisely, is the heart of archival endeavour—disclosure of context.”\(^5\) Thus in this project, “layers” is also used to show the enormity of family history—its dissenting aspects, as well as its mainstream, its plentiful records and its underbelly of oral accounts, its transgressive acts of privilege-seeking within democracy, its positivist background, its populist traditions welcoming and tolerant across many boundaries—all these influences that themselves are not easily contained.

Such layers are addressed in the chapter’s beginning excerpts, which come from the novelist William Maxwell in his autobiographical book entitled *Ancestors*. Like others interested in family history described in subsequent chapters, Maxwell chose the local setting as an organizing theme. Unlike some family historians studied here, he inhabited a landscape in which migration did not nurture the creation of records. In his account, other circumstances influenced remembering: a people convinced of a promised land but too tired to write at the end of the day, the eclipse of the private memory by the published local history, and the narrative selectively recalled.

**Layers**

For Maxwell and many memory practitioners, family history is “an iterative process,” an ongoing search that builds question upon question.\(^6\) In their vocabularies, family historians and album makers borrow from the status-linked functions initially


\(^6\) Duffand Johnson, “Where is the List with All the Names,” 94; Yakel, “Seeking Information, Seeking Connections”; Yakel and Torres, “Genealogists as a ‘Community of Records,’” 102.
served by genealogy and the domesticity of the private albums. They speak of a universe where records and accounts are ordered and transmitted, one above the other, or one moved here or there. They compile genealogies; they craft collages. They order new information in relation to what is already known. They also represent their findings in a variety of formats: some linearly laid out on pages, some in trees branching in various directions, some in entirely different fashions. They choose to study a particular ancestor for reasons as diverse as locating all the wearers of a particular christening gown or wedding veil, as practical as choosing the side of the family where most information can be found, or as corrective as selecting only those in a matriarchal line. For them, the statement of Michael Young in *The Metronomic Society* prevails: “The cyclical depends on the linear as much as the linear depends on the cyclical.” To one leader in the genealogical community, the search always involves something like “chains of DNA … endlessly twisted coils … [that] make sense only when we learn to read the string, interpreting both the parts and the whole.” Maxwell employed the metaphor of the “kaleidoscope” with its fragments of colorful pebbles shifting within a tube of mirrors, to represent different versions of the past that can be made in the present. One of the main purposes of the work of family historians and album makers is to evaluate these configurations, and in so doing to add to the existing knowledge about families, to contribute what they often call their own “layer.”

At the most basic level, this increment of records is both a consequence and an example of archivalization: “the conscious or unconscious choice (determined by social and cultural factors) to consider something worth archiving.”11 Family historians and album makers decide to collect materials, and they use materials that have been collected. Here there is a continuum of reciprocity where oral accounts, personal and official practices come together to define what counts as a representation of the past. Family historians and album makers also create new materials and make new records, a process by which the past and present become part of one another.12

Archivalization and later phases in genealogical inquiries are considered stages within collective memory, i.e., the socially organized or mediated representation of the past created via socially produced artifacts, and held in common by a group.13 Knowledge of a family’s past is created via various institutions and individuals in adjustments dependent neither solely on the powers of the state (in public records) nor on dedicated memory forms (in private records) nor on traditions and lived experiences, but in the mediation between and incorporation of all these forms.

Collective memory formation can be compared to the formation of records, an analogy that extends the interpretation that archival science can find in studying family history practices. Family historians and album makers both seek and create “persistent representations,” and they have “prototypes” in particular inscribed records and the more distantly associative “not-quite records” of family albums and oral accounts, to apply one

encompassing definition of records from Geoffrey Yeo.\textsuperscript{14} Like record formation, memory formation also displays “recursive processes” embodying “multivalent temporality,” that is, the “simultaneous presence of multiple chronologies and contexts in a single document or body of documents.” Creation, capture, classification, and other steps are recursive, potentially located along “multiple pathways” in Brien Brothman’s schemata as “a helical model” that is always complexly located in various mediating points.\textsuperscript{15}

The notions of public and private also cross various boundaries similarly aligned in understandings of record formation and memory studies. Public records, those held in publicly-accessible institutions, sometimes become private records when they are recontextualized in the creations of family historians and album makers. Private records, what in North America are generally called “private or personal papers,” often become public when they are donated to a repository or added to a website. These considerations of public and private as concerned with use and access follow the thinking of Tom Nesmith who wrote, “A public record, created by social and technical processes of inscription, transmission, and contextualization, is an evolving mediation of understanding about some phenomena which a given society deems to be in the public domain.”\textsuperscript{16} The context of records changes their status, and thus changes “what they are.” His example is that of women’s records, once considered not worthy of placement in archives at all, since women were outside the official historical realm. Their records were not transmitted to archives, or were not retained in such a way that they became part of

the inscribed past. That is one reason this study addresses those women who work with memories that are still not often transferred to the public realm situated within archives.

**Literature Review: Family History from the Perspective of Archivists and Librarians**

Archival and library science literature in general has presented layers of meanings pertaining to family history. Before the late 1990s, as Elizabeth Yakel points out, librarians and archivists “largely conceptualize[d] genealogical research from a managerial perspective.” Underneath this perspective were scattered writings on the history of genealogy, and some acknowledgement of the centrality of genealogists among the users of archives and libraries. Microfilm, the growth of the Latter Day Saints libraries around the U.S., and the first manuals from the 1930s onward all brought attention to genealogists as the most numerous among archival and library users. In the late twentieth century, an interest in social history made acceptance of genealogists one of the key managerial problems Yakel named, but also widened the approaches to considering family historians.

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17 Ibid., 144.
In the 1970s and 1980s, many archivists and librarians came to write about the expanding communities of genealogists. A number of writers addressed attempts to deal with lingering stereotypes—usually ones characterized as elderly women not prepared for earnest research.\textsuperscript{21} Other writers acknowledged that family historians had never been the most valued researchers, acknowledged the alignment of archivists and librarians with historians that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{22}

Hugh Taylor, writing in the 1980s, was one of the first to recognize areas where archivists and genealogical researchers were meeting together for mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{23} Similarly, Robert Warner found genealogists to be significant players in the intense five-year period from 1980 to 1985 called the National Archives Independence Movement.\textsuperscript{24} As Phebe Jacobsen observed in 1981, archivists began to question a hierarchy of users where family historians were relegated to the back of the line.\textsuperscript{25} In a late 1980s’ study, Rhianna Helen Edwards examined responses to family historians in archives to see if an increased interest in social history, the intense popularity of the 1976 novel and 1977 television film \textit{Roots}, and the lobbying power of a growing user group had made any


change in these attitudes towards family historians. She found that some change had occurred, but only marginally.26

International attention focused on this changing milieu for genealogy in a 1992 special issue of *Archivum*. Giving more insight into the history of genealogy in different cultures than to services in archives, this issue, nevertheless, brought cross-cultural information on family history.27 Rosemary Boyns pointed in another direction suggesting that the rich social history of the era should make archivists interested in family historians. She found then positive change in greater willingness by archivists to work with genealogists in the United Kingdom.28 In the same period, Christopher Barth looked specifically to new services, finding that genealogists would be well served by more finding aids online and digitization projects.29 Christie Wood studied the demographics of the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, 1969–2004, pointing out, however, that the new genealogy had not brought much positive reception in archives to family historians.30 Another recent study, by Wendy Duff and Catherine Johnson, acknowledged the need to see processes of work among genealogists. Duff and Johnson argued for online retrieval systems that allowed access not only through finding aids but also through names, places, types of documents, interactive maps, and Boolean searching—ways family historians searched.31 Yakel and Deborah Torres followed closely, identifying genealogists’ searches for meaning, connections, and strategies that offered insight into memory

26 Edwards, “Archivists’ Outlook on Service.”
31 Duff and Johnson, “Where is the List with All the Names,” 80–81, 94–95.
formation among this important user group, and their communal and individual endeavors.\textsuperscript{32}

Michael Moss concentrated too on the meanings of family records, inherent in the paths of so many people to the past, even though, “most … ancestors have left only the shallowest footprints on its surface; a name in a directory, a poor law register, a census or a list of emigrants.”\textsuperscript{33} Hannah Little also addressed such topics as she explored the nature of authenticity and the link between genealogy and identity. Using the background of Scottish tourism designed around family history, she asked questions of heritage itself. For whom, are programs about heritage useful? What roles do archives play in the construction of identities? Most critically for this study, Little spoke of the value of an awareness of “uses of records beyond the point of creation—their use as memorials, as sites of spiritual value and forgetting, their use in the construction of the self and sense of community, their role in the imagination and consumerism.”\textsuperscript{34} Like Louise Craven in her edited volume \textit{What are Archives?}, Little asked readers to consider what about records “fascinates”—specifically in the context of family history.\textsuperscript{35} Finally, Scott Lucas investigated how genealogists search for information, and then designed an information-seeking model that tells the stages genealogists work through to find materials in libraries.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} Yakel, “Seeking Information, Seeking Connections”; Yakel and Torres, “Genealogists as a ‘Community of Records,’” 93–113.
\textsuperscript{34} Hannah Little, “Archive Fever as Genealogical Fever: Coming Home to Scottish Archives,” \textit{Archivaria} 64 (Fall 2007): 112.
\textsuperscript{36} Scott Anthony Lucas, “The Information Seeking Processes of Genealogists” (PhD diss., Emporia State University, 2008).
In two essays, Eric Ketelaar has detailed forms and processes of earlier family history. In one work, he describes steps towards a “patrimonial consciousness” beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the subsequent perceptions of archives as part of this patrimony developing “first in the private sphere.” In another essay, he writes of the “genealogical gaze” arising earlier and continuing in Tuscany, especially in Florence, but also in England and the Netherlands. The family archives in various forms were shown to again represent the “permeable” at times “nonexistent” boundaries of “public and private memories and archives.”

These boundaries are shifting too in today’s world. As Richard Cox reminds archivists, the huge growth of personal archives means that “new partnerships with the public” will be forged. In these partnerships, Cox explores a host of writers who like Yakel, Ketelaar, Yakel and Torres, Little, Craven, and Lucas all direct archival science readers to other disciplines to study how private record keepers have been considered. These works from other disciplines are interwoven in the chapters ahead.

**Literature Review: Albums and Private Memory Keeping about Families**

Whereas archival science has a body of work on family history, archivists have not devoted as much attention to the history of albums kept about family history. Thus, for background, one must include among the few works of archivists and librarians, studies by historians of print culture, anthropologists, art historians, and sociologists who

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have examined the functions and forms of albums.\textsuperscript{40} Primarily, these scholars describe albums as platforms from which to project images of the self, and stories of the past and present, for the future. In turn, album makers themselves are seen as active producers, historians as well as storytellers of their own lives.

Maurice Rickards was one of the first to position the history of albums on a road that extends from the first availability of printed matter to the present, from traditions of memorialization (in memory objects placed in early books), pedagogy (in the creation of commonplace books), and friendship and the circulation of poetry and literature (in the *album amicorum*).\textsuperscript{41} Ann Moss, Frances Yates, James Kinneavy, and Kenneth Lockridge also added to this idea of a genealogy of the album in which commonplace books served as mnemonic tools and vehicles for self-expression.\textsuperscript{42}

In this same sort of tradition, Ketelaar described not only the late middle ages and early Renaissance “genealogical gaze,” but also the *ricordanze* in which to keep family records. These books combined elements of a commonplace book, an account book, a chronicle and a diary—\textsuperscript{43} a rich subject discussed more in Chapter Three.

That similar forms and influences were present, albeit on a more modest scale, among early Americans, has been the subject of Peter Benes, Georgia Brady Barnhill, Maureen A. Taylor, and others in their study of “genealogical artifacts in New England”

\textsuperscript{40} For a bibliography of these works see Danielle Bias, Rebecca Black, and Susan Tucker, “Scrapbooks and Albums, Theories and Practice: An Annotated Bibliography,” Tulane University, http://www.newcomb.tulane.edu/~wclib/susan.html (accessed March 10, 2009).
\textsuperscript{43} Ketelaar, “The Genealogical Gaze,” 10.
and Pennsylvania. Like the ricordanze, these registers and painted family trees are discussed in Chapter Three as prized possessions of early record keepers. Family records and family albums to hold these records have also been studied by those interested in the invention of chromolithography at the end of the eighteenth century, and the invention of photography in 1837.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the words “album” and “scrapbook” have been used interchangeably in function, in conversation, and in scholarly writing. Ronald and Mary Zboray see albums as “boundary blurring objects,” akin to, and often used to serve the same functions as, diaries, commonplace books, journals, and especially scrapbooks. Yet, as literary critic Patricia Buckler argues, these types of documents have varying levels of privacy—with diaries being the most private, and ledgers and albums being the most public. The New England Historic Genealogical Society has never had an official name for these albums but an archivist there, Tim Salls, calls them “scrapbook genealogies.” These isolated forms generally were included within larger collections representing connections to travel, learning, and possessions, and thus were often eclipsed in descriptions and in access. No scholar has ever studied this form focused solely on the family.

Instead, scholars of family life have devoted attention to the photograph album, probably because photographs themselves proved a less cumbersome subject than scattered memorabilia layered within a book. Bound books to hold photos appeared in the 1850s and, according to Elizabeth Siegel, quickly spread. By the 1870s rare indeed was a middle-class home without such a volume. Photographic albums were first created to allow people to amass the images of notable people. However, Marilyn Motz creatively compared these earlier albums to later forms, showing how women altered conventional poses, settings, and clothing to give an individualistic view of themselves outside and within expected societal conventions.

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Buckler and Kay Leeper’s work on one scrapbook from the 1840s also shows the appropriation of the wider culture into a personalized form, as women accumulated, sorted, and pasted materials related to marriage, motherhood, virtue, religion, and politics.

Ellen Gruber Garvey’s work over the last decade has consistently shown how advertising and the development of a consumer society contributed to scrapbook making. Though she does not devote attention to family scrapbooks per se, her work is significant in describing how various groups re-circulated ideas about themselves and their beliefs, and notably, for this project, how mourning for the dead of the Civil War was preserved in albums.

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Similarly, Roger Lane used scrapbooks to write a history of race in Philadelphia. As his starting point, Lane used the scrapbooks of African-American William Dorsey to show the building of collective memory among African Americans in the city. During the years 1870 to 1923, Dorsey compiled some 338 scrapbooks and 914 biographical files, more than half of which were devoted to people of color.  

Archivists and librarians initially concerned themselves with the conservation of albums and the history of bindings, rather than insights into the contents of such works. Robert DeCandido provided an overview of assemblage problems. Similarly, Richard Horton traced various styles of albums, beginning with a common, unstubbred blank book in the 1850s. Jane Rutherston found that the bulk of British patents for albums and scrapbooks dated from 1860 to 1900.

More recently, archivists have studied the scrapbooks of other marginalized groups in order to show how individuals created a discourse about their communities that can be found in no other place. Carol Bowers, for example, analyzed the scrapbook of a prostitute in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Wyoming; and L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin analyzed the scrapbooks of a depression-era teenager in West Virginia. Bowers and Melvin show the varied influences on scrapbook making: the

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desire to present the self in a favorable light, as well as to reflect on goals dependent on knowledge of the outside world.

Deborah Smith and Juliana Kuipers have also looked at scrapbooks from the perspective of library science and archivistics. Smith argued that album making was a reaction to capitalism. Introduced to huge amounts of colorful paper for the first time, mid nineteenth-century Europeans and North Americans crafted documents in which they shared hopes and wishes, as well as knowledge of products.58 Juliana Kuipers followed this theme, urging that visual literacy skills be required of archivists who deal with these “intriguing combination of diaries, photograph albums, and ephemera.”59 Kuipers’ ideas, like my work with Katherine Ott and Patricia Buckler,60 link scrapbooks and quilts as still relatively unexplored sources for researchers interested in women’s history.61

Others, too, see album making as one lens from which to interpret gender and memory. Despite the fact that some men made albums, girls and women have a long history of album making. Todd Gernes, for example, has shown that girls and women came to be associated with friendship albums.62 Tamar Katriel and Thomas Farrell also reported that people who were shown a century-old scrapbook described its maker as a “she.”63 Compiling scrapbooks of trade cards was also associated with girls, according to Garvey.64

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62 Gernes, “Recasting the Culture of Ephemera,” v, 62.
The most well-known writing on gender, memory, and the keeping of family records comes from Pierre Bourdieu. He credits the “sexual division of labour” as giving the wife in a family “the responsibility of maintaining relations with members of the group who live a long way away…. One of the means of doing so is in the sending of photographs. Moreover, Bourdieu considers “the family photograph” as part of “a ritual of the domestic cult in which the family is both subject and object,” an important recognition if one is considering who controls private memory forms. Bourdieu also describes “the celebratory sense which the family group gives to itself” in sharing family accounts through images, an observation which would be recognizable to family historians and album makers studied here who share albums with kin and neighbors.

Transmission

This connecting function of family history and these past interests by scholars concern the transmission of knowledge through various forms and genres. But transmission, archivally defined around records, itself is important in other ways as well. Access to records, public or private, is predicated most basically on the arrival of records in archives. Transmission is considered, from diplomatics, as the transfer of a record from one party to another. Transmission’s definition in memory studies concerns both passage and receipt of some representation of the past, and thus concerns a social act, the


giving of a memory from one person to another.\textsuperscript{67} Family historians and album makers, like the forms of memory texts themselves, "mediate" this transmission.\textsuperscript{68}

Heretofore, in archivistics, transmission has been either assumed (in that a record would not exist if it had not been a part of a preserved transaction transmitted at some point), or subsumed in discussions of authenticity or provenance.\textsuperscript{69} But the transmission of records should be understood here as one facet of public history and, as Nesmith and postmodernists theorists believe, one part of mediation and a communication process.\textsuperscript{70} This type of transmission can be wedded to a Victorian translation of Francis Bacon’s seventeenth-century \textit{ars tradendi} to signify "that what we know depends on the practices of communication by which the knowledge comes to us."\textsuperscript{71} As Nesmith states, "what we know is mediated by our representations of it, with all their strengths and limitations."\textsuperscript{72}

These more capacious definitions of transmission also follow an idea articulated by Paul Connerton in the 1980s that an understanding of the social formation of memory must include knowledge of those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible.\textsuperscript{73} These acts of transfer are today accomplished via a vernacular knowledge of family records, undertaken by people who display richly textured levels of purposes and meaning-making as they compile both memory and evidence. These acts of transfer are also today subject to many and increasing social and technological practices that mediate what becomes public or private, and that mediate the democratization of sources, the

\textsuperscript{67} Irwin-Zarecka, \textit{Frames of Remembrance}, 176.
\textsuperscript{68} van Dijck, \textit{Mediated Memories}, 15–26.
\textsuperscript{70} Nesmith, “Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate,” 143.
\textsuperscript{72} Nesmith, “Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate,” 144.
\textsuperscript{73} Paul Connerton, \textit{How Societies Remember} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9.
public nature of history. In family history work, new context is added upon old context and transmitted as part of a collective. Records are received; they are interpreted and passed on.

Most North American archivists understand records as involving both the creation of records within a particular agency or by a particular person and the passage of the records from an active to an inactive state. U.S. archivists consider this as “transmittal,” whereas Canadians have integrated more consistently ideas from diplomatics concerned with archival use, and thus employ the word “transmission.” But North Americans overall, if they consider transmission again after disposition in an archives, look towards authenticity, care to preserve the trail of provenance, and relationships to other records as “the archival bond.” They generally neglect how this bond grows after the transmission of the records to archives.

In a diplomatic sense, transmission historically had to do with translation since ecclesiastical records particularly required wide dissemination in other languages. Transmission in an electronic environment of records requires other definitions, similar

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76 Duranti, Diplomatics, 164–172; MacNeil, “Trusting Records in a Postmodern World.”
to translation, but complicated by the series of changes in a record that potentially can be made in seconds.

In both the older and newer meanings of transmission, it becomes associated with “use” and, according to Yakel, “the idea that access [to records] is important.” Like the overarching purposes of archives, the transmission of records creates and maintains communities, insures continuity, and at the same time, influences methods for change and the creation of new information, new knowledge.

Writings from anthropology assist in the expansion of these archival concepts concerning transmission. In the 1950s, anthropologist Laura Bohannen observed that an understanding of transmission allowed consideration of a story’s changes over time, and “selective forgetting.” Later, Jan Vansina informed readers about the “chain” of tellers, mnemonic devices, and awareness of distortions and veracity in oral accounts in general including family history. Vansina’s assistance to Roots’ author, Alex Haley, just when he was about to give up pursuit of his African ancestors makes the anthropologist’s public crossing into the understanding of transmission all the more relevant to this project. In other ways, key phrases from anthropology such as Elizabeth Tonkin’s “representations of pastness” rather than “history” aid in the suggestion of how to

approach modifications shaping accounts over time.\textsuperscript{84} Social transmission, Tonkin observed, should not be studied without attention to conditions of production and aesthetic practices.\textsuperscript{85} In a study of family trees as ethnographic shorthand, Mary Bouquet adds to the history of the visual depiction of lineage, its own transmission of information among both professionals and the general public.\textsuperscript{86} Bouquet’s work is helpful since she observed that “While the genealogical method seems to separate the biological from the social and cultural constructions of kinship,” doing so is not “neutral.” Instead, available forms influence the stories as they are passed among people. The form of the family tree is illustrative of change as well as stasis. The tree affords a universal symbol,\textsuperscript{87} but another aspect of contextual transmission is there too, hidden. Earlier family trees placed the head of the family at the top, or in the middle of the tree.\textsuperscript{88} The current shape of the family tree suggests an accommodation of a new form of transmission, a hierarchy in which the ground is seen as the logical starting point. Online family trees give instantaneous transmission to other branches, other families, other trees—demonstrating kinship’s movement across space and time.\textsuperscript{89}

Transmission as a concern of social memory fits within a genealogy of its own—descended from Maurice Halbwach’s \textit{Les Cadres de la Mémoire} (1925) and \textit{La Mémoire Collective} (1950) to contemporary interdisciplinary memory studies. The work of Daniel


\textsuperscript{85} Elizabeth Tonkin, and Harvey Whitehouse, “Memory and Social Transmission,” \textit{Anthropology Today} 11, no. 5 (October 1995): 23–24.


\textsuperscript{88} Maureen A. Taylor, “Tall Oaks from Little Acorns Grow: The Family Tree Lithograph in America,” in Simons and Benes, \textit{The Art of Family}, 75–76.

R. Woolf is especially helpful since he characterized personal, community, and social memory in early modern England as necessary to collective memory. The first was often transmitted orally; the second was performed (that is, transmitted in other ways as the aggregate of experiences); and the third was “mediated” in some “narrative form.”

Technology today enables transmission also in a mixing of forms. Memory becomes both “a product and a process,” as noted in Chapter One; or as José van Dijck states, the “versatility and morphing quality of digital memory machines” affords “a positive element that is integral to human reminiscing.”

Technology enables the individual creator and the individual user or reader to stand together as “a centre and medium of this never ending process of translation.” This translation is again about access and use, akin to a metaphoric translation that occurs in generations of records use. This translation also underscores Ketelaar’s statement that memory texts arise from a combination of public and private interfaces, from archival and embodied dimensions. Further too, Roger Chartier reminds us that electronic transmission changes “materiality.” The “computer screen … enables different types of texts to appear in front of the reader, texts that, in the world of the scribal and a fortiori printed cultures, were distributed among distinct objects.” Electronic family records can be seen as very often accomplished in undifferentiated forms of records, with little maintenance of the context of their creations made apparent on computer screens. But

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91 van Dijck, Mediated Memories, 163; Papailias, Genres of Recollection, 16.
this was also true of transcriptions of records by hand, a centuries-old practice, thus giving more past influences stacked within any understanding of transmission.

**Recontextualization**

Transcriptions uniformly privilege content over context. But even before that stage, other layers of change have been added to transmitted records. In the exchange of custodianship, recontextualization begins. It is always a part of transmission and in subsequent chapters will be folded within a more unitary discussion of transmission. Yet, definitions of its meaning should be considered. As Ketelaar notes,

> Recontextualization … takes place at every stage of a record’s life and in every dimension of the records continuum, adding values to (or subtracting values from) the records as *semiophore*, to use Krzysztof Pomian’s term for museum artifacts. Like the objects in a museum, records derive their significance from the different “invisibles” they construct and from the ways in which they mediate these to spectators or users.\(^95\)

Curators give “shape and presence to history,” dehistoricize artifacts and art—or, give them new layers of meanings.\(^96\) For this same reason, many archivists argue against exhibitions of records.\(^97\) Likewise, they also usually see family history albums and other family history forms as derivative, unoriginal, and not suitable for donations to archives. For archivists, scrapbooks are neither manuscript, record, or book, but some hybrid form.\(^98\) Albums are already recontextualized records, in other words.

Many family historians and album makers know well the prior movements of their sources, and are also conscious that they are creating new context for the sources.

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\(^95\) Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives,” 137.
Their “Bible” of information is called *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, and here one can learn about the forms of records created in different eras, how they were moved from this court house to that library, and other movements of creation, capture, and use. Album makers too concentrate on the arrangement of records as they choose what is easily retrieved. They call this “creativity” in knowing the past and transmitting it. Recontextualization, in these movements and this creativity, facilitates the insertion of the self into the records.

There follows a sense of ownership of records. The use of records is complemented by a belief that records are created in a communal sense for the people. Many family historians and album makers recall the 1973 Freedom of Information Act, increasing openness, transparency, and thus accountability in government. They also discuss issues of access before the Internet: few open hours at archives and libraries, laws against access to birth certificates, the cost of travel to distant repositories, etc. Their beliefs and the new possibilities for access form part of an overall movement of openness in records but also recontextualize ideas about records. In possession of records, the family historians and album makers are growing their personal archives. They bring then a change in the concept of “consignation” of records and authority over the past being restricted to the state and the academy. For family history keepers, both public and private spaces will keep the records needed for their work, and both will serve as places where their own records can be deposited or willed. Important for archivists are

considerations of where and under what circumstances these spaces are located. Clearly all personal archives will not come to repositories, yet they will have a public presence in other ways, and thus when showing family history, will tell a recontextualized history. Where will archivists stand in this sort of world and what sorts of assistance is needed?  

**Pluralization**

Other sorts of transmission and recontextualization concern the redefinition of public and private in an age of technology. Disparate collections now can be joined online without being joined in actual location. This type of sharing involves yet assuring an authentic and reliable collective memory, which Australian archivists (and others) place as part of the pluralization dimension of the records continuum model. Pluralization, in this sense, enables “records to be reviewed, accessed and analyzed beyond an organization or individual life, for multiple external accountability and memory purposes in and through time and spaces.”  

Pluralization allows “the knowledge of events (in our case, reflected in records)” to be “communicated to social groups, creating shared experience and knowledge across communities.” Pluralization concerns the extension of records as collective memory within and beyond the archives.  

Like transmission and recontextualization, pluralization concerns use, and is indeed dependent on these two other steps. Here, another layer becomes apparent since there are “inherent or potential rights of others in records,” and thus “challenges” to “the

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notion of recordkeeping as existing within the domain of one single entity. Recordkeeping of this kind becomes a dynamic relationship to be managed across time.”

Family historians and album makers are centrally located as part of this dynamic relationship.

These memory practitioners “bring an exterior view into an archiving system.” They do so, as Hugh Taylor first articulated in the 1980s, by actively advising archivists about the use of records, contributing private records, acting as proponents for open records, and again, transmitting new records. But also today they do so by showing personal archives online. One such archives, that of Rick E. Barry, shows letters, photographs, records, and texts in a project he describes as an “ongoing exercise in personal electronic records.” In brief, he has recontextualized his family’s genealogy online to allow access to anyone who chooses to look.

Seeing and hearing about the steps involved in the creation of collective memory from these groups and these people, i.e., *their layers*, therefore has the power to enlarge the understanding of the records continuum. Studying family historians and album makers offers the chance to show how the “the record-keeping regimes” utilized and sometimes created by others (outside the archival profession) “carry” records “forward and enable their use for multiple purposes by delivering them to people living in different times and spaces.” To return to Brothman’s “helical curves of time,” dwelling and

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106 Ibid., 182.
moving “along multiple pathways tracing numerous chronologies,” the records used and created in family history loop back and forth between various points from archives to publications to websites to family albums to various other stages of collective memory.

Yet, in studying memory practices of family history, pluralization also has other meanings with the potential to enrich an understanding of records. One meaning is found in the multiplicity of individuals from different backgrounds who have come to make up the U.S., again as part of migration, as well as the even more diverse people who use technology today. Media scholar Leah A. Lievrouw looks to this sort of joining of voices. Her queries concern technology’s affordances of “meaningful interaction, sociality and learning that institutions once provided, without making the same demands for broader ‘core solidarity’ or norm consensus embedded in traditional media and institutions.” In their podcasts, their wikis, their online scrapbooks, family historians and album makers promote a different environment of sharing than one would have in person, a layer again of change in information sharing across various boundaries. This sort of pluralization shows another example of records as “evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us” but the “us” is redefined, or pluralized.

Another pertinent meaning of pluralization comes because memory practitioners operate within environments that have increasingly allowed more and more proximity to records. This layer of meaning speaks then to some shortening of “the distance to power relationship.” As Geert and Geert Jan Hofstede in Culture’s Consequences note, the more democratic a society, the more any marginal population may feel empowered to speak up

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for themselves to the powers-that-be.\textsuperscript{113} U.S. family historians and album makers believe that migration brought this type of society, this pluralization of voices, and lessened both the distance between their ancestors and those in power, and the distance between themselves and the records created by those in power.

Again, though, this pluralization loops back to another framework: a society that for much of its history rested on the systematic exclusion of civil liberties to many people—certainly to women and African Americans. For them, the distance from the lines of communication with the powerful was great. They were not often a part of the plurality heard by government. The work of family history, then, like the metaphor of a brotherhood of mankind first written about by the revolutionary fathers, is framed in an idiom of kinship that is constantly in need of revision.

\textbf{Influences}

The novelist Maxwell quoted at the beginning of this chapter understood these layers of memories, practices, and meanings on a personal level. Even simple impediments stop collective memory, as he noted in the reluctance of his father: “He did not like to be interrupted in the middle of his narrative.”\textsuperscript{114} That is always the danger of insider status: the bother of being disturbed in an established pattern. Collecting in a scrapbook as his grandmother did also did not yield the information he desired, for as Susan Stewart observes,

While the point of the souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of the collection is forgetting—starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{114} Maxwell, \textit{Ancestors}, 300.
\textsuperscript{115} Stewart, \textit{On Longing}, 152.
But therein too rests the appeal of family history: identities are not fixed, they are moving, as more and more records reveal new interpretations. The main influences on this “interruption” of old processes explored here and in later chapters are technology, levels of expertise with records, gender, and migration.

Technology

Throughout time, those interested in family history transmitted it in one form or another to subsequent generations, often in a dependency on technologies of reading and writing, and now including technologies of electronics (digitally reproducing texts, images, and sounds). Whether told in a story, a name, a gravestone, or digital photograph, recontextualized materials exist to keep some aspect of the past in the present. For example, in the early 1700s, the Virginian William Byrd II commissioned such a representation in a chart of 28 by 17.5 inches from the English College of Heralds. The Byrd pedigree remains today—the result of “an unidentified compiler” who had knowledge of family lineage and use of paint and parchment. But someone else also literally framed the chart, and someone else also copied it onto another sheet of paper.116 Someone donated it to the Virginia Historical Society. Here curators show that most other eighteenth-century genealogical information was also often recopied, incorporated into larger works, or placed with other papers. In the case of the well-to-do Virginians such as the Byrd family and their descendants, these derivatives and originals sat between other...

116 Byrd Family Papers, 1684–1842, Mss 1 B9968 a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. See also Byrd Family Papers, Mss 6:2 B9965:1 (Katherine Wilkins, Reference Librarian, Virginia Historical Society, email to author, December 12, 2008). Wilkins noted, among others, the records of the Byrd Family Genealogy: Mss 6:2 B9965:1, the Genealogical chart of the “Brid” (Bird and Byrd) family; Mss 6:2 P4685:1, Genealogia perantiquae et noblis Peytornorum familiae (1684); and Mss 6:2 P4685:2, the Genealogical chart of the Peyton Family, compiled in 1688, Virginia Historical Society.
records about crops, correspondence with merchants, and, at times, the genealogical information of slaves.\footnote{Email from Katherine Wilkins to author, December 12, 2008.} That researchers today have access to such works is due in large part to the copying and transcription efforts of antiquarians and genealogists.\footnote{Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck, "Four Centuries of Genealogy: A Historical Overview," \textit{RQ} 23 (1983): 165.} The reading rooms of libraries and archives across the U.S. contain many examples of such copying and transcription efforts, published in book form for limited readership. These layers of originals and derivatives, on a basic level, remain to us because of technologies of pen, pencil, inks, printing, and binding.

Introduced in the 1930s, the microfilming project of the Mormons was a similar extension. Besides showing the original record on film, the Mormons‘ work enabled the use of records by millions of people. Public records once confined to particular repositories (immovable and therefore inaccessible to many people) could now be accessed as copies, could be transmitted to countless locations.

The technological revolution of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries further extends this transmission. The Internet and numerous electronic databases offer unprecedented access to records. Family historians and album makers use records online, and they create online communities that again reshape alignments and records. Both the record users and the records themselves become even more a part of a network that transmits, recontextualizes, and pluralizes. The record users add new layers—posting information on records, presenting their scanned copies, and linking their family history to other events, people, and a multiplicity of archives, public and private. They feed these layers back into the overall system.
Technology also has changed the position of the record in the hierarchy of authority. Science now may trump inscription on paper. Family historians themselves have long required a triangulation of data: three sources from records are considered their standard. Now one DNA test can be seen, at times, as the ultimate authority.  

*Levels of Expertise*

Writing, reading, and science are themselves dependent on the skills of people with various levels of expertise. One can divide them, as stated in Chapter One, between the hobbyists, the professional genealogists, the Mormons, the archivists, the librarians, the workers in the commercial firms providing databases, and others. One can also look at a hierarchy of knowers in other ways, based upon their knowledge of sources. As genealogist Elizabeth Shown Mills concludes there are “family-tree climbers” who work intent upon finding names and places without regard to standards of any sort; “traditional genealogists” who devote leisure time with attention to standards of the field; and “genealogical historians” who strive to portray each human life they study based upon available resources. Some of these latter two groups can become professional genealogists, certified through the Board for Certification in one or more of six categories of specialization.  

Today all these different types of people practice within the parameters of what has been called the “new genealogy,” a term first used in the 1970s to show genealogy’s growth from “knowing the names and dates of ancestors” to wanting “to find out more about them, the things they did, the incidents that happened to them and the local

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120 Mills, “Genealogy in the Information Age,” 272.  
The backgrounds of their homes and places of work.”122 Yet the older forms of family history had cleared a path to the past that left various markers in the present. The late nineteenth century witnessed the appearance of the first professional historians who distanced themselves from family history.123 Library and archival policies followed this reasoning, adopting various prejudicial policies concerned with family historians well into the 1970s.124 The schism between history and genealogy in some ways has remained within American society, and certainly remains in some archives where historians are the preferred users.125 Even in the early 2000s, Laura Graham, writing about the Library of Congress’s digital American Memory Project, conceded that she and others had no idea that “the flow of content and information back to the Library of Congress from people who have local history, genealogical, or other specialized information to offer” would be so great in “enhancing descriptions of items in the institution’s collections.”126 Most likely, she had no idea because she did not know about genealogists, their numbers, and their ways of practice. Many family historians have an understanding of this uneasy friction between older meanings of family history and the remaining perceptions about their own skills and habits.127

Most album makers, on the other hand, remain outside the library and archives, neither donors nor users. Yet, they form another grouping of people who consider themselves as memory keepers and experts on family records. They are ones to whom

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125 Tucker, “Visible Enough to Us.”
family history is often entrusted, the guardians of family items, that are usually considered “signposts of family history, which help family members re-experience crucial events and relationships they share.”

**Gender**

Gender creates another layer within the practices of knowing the past. As mentioned in Chapter One, there is, on the one hand, the centuries-long exclusion of women from groups controlling inscribed memory, and on the other, the long dependence on women as memorial tenders. There is also, at times, a tendency to see women as naturally endowed with the ability to remember. As the president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania argued in 1825 when admitting women to this group was first considered (and voted down), women were thought to have “superior memories,” and even acted as “living records of oral traditions.”

There was then a simultaneous marginalization and centrality of women as record keepers. Family historians and album makers look to names in samplers, quilts, other textile pieces, scrapbooks, and other artifacts. Here women’s roles could be blessed. Here women could be charged with naming practices, stories, and signs in various tangible forms. In such objects, women bent “legal notions that constricted women’s right to own property” and created “narratives lost in conventional political narratives, and writing—with a needle as well as a pen—[establishing] … identity beyond death.”

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131 Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, especially 1–4 on methodology.
Yet by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, family history came to offer one of the few endeavors that allowed women intellectual pursuits and leadership roles. Consider the work of Susa [sic] Young Gates, one of the daughters of Mormon leader Brigham Young. Gates became the principal organizer in the massive imperialistic empire of memory of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS). Because of her influence, family history still reaches more and more people. She established the first classes in genealogical methods, organized the women of the church to complete family histories and to serve as models for the way their sons should take over this work. She also pushed for adequate funding for the library in Salt Lake City, Utah. Known popularly as the thirteenth prophet, a distinctively different honor for a woman in a patriarchal church, Gates also made sure that the LDS library would be open to non-Mormons—a generosity, however potentially proselytizing, which would have far-reaching influence.133

Gates and her Mormon female followers were not alone in becoming public stewards of family memory and ancestry during the Progressive Era. Other middle-class women of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century worked through societies such as the Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to take on similar roles across the U.S. Their efforts now figure in any number of monuments to the past, from trails showing the movements of ancestors, public displays of records and records’ use from their mammoth headquarters in Washington, D.C., to book groups and statues in small towns, to prizes and scholarships for countless

students.134 For years, too, the DAR chapters across the U.S. published “lineage books,” which served as a public venue for the works of women.135 “Since the early 1900s local DAR units donated one copy of each of their publications to the public libraries in their jurisdiction.”136

Other genealogical societies formed since the 1970s are today made up of both men and women, but women remain in the majority. Women also undertake family history for different reasons than do men,137 reasons that impact transmission. Writing about a group of Canadian genealogists, Ronald D. Lambert found that women are more likely than men to come to family history wanting to:

- know their ancestors as people, to go back in time in their imagination, to check a family history or mystery and to trace diseases in their family trees. They were also more likely to cite feelings of competence and the challenge of puzzles, as well as enjoyment in meeting living relatives and associating with other genealogists…. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to report that publishing a book or article and filling their spare time were important reasons.138

In a 1980s’ survey, women were found to prefer the history of the family over the history of racial or ethnic groups, local communities, or national history more often than men did.139 These interests of women would be found today among almost all album makers. They form the “foundations of family history research,” one of the persons experienced genealogists tell beginners to consult in initial interviews and surveys of

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“home sources: artifacts and documents.”140 This study deliberately sets heritage album makers in apposition to traditional family historians because they both form layers in how so many others in families and societies come to know the past.

**Migration**

While so many family historians and album makers in the U.S. are women, it is rare indeed to meet anyone, male or female, looking for family history who is not concerned with migration. The actuality and metaphor of this movement of people building the country is central to all family history discourse and to many other popular American sentiments. Consider how much ancestral memory was evoked in early 2009 when Barack Obama gave his inaugural speech to become the 44th president of the United States:

> For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sanh. Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life.141

Considering the potency of this national memory, most people begin family history in search of their “crossing ancestors”—that is with those who migrated to the New World. Almost every family has a crossing story of some kind to tell: it’s the story of the way we became Americans. In African-American family history, the crossing is a nightmare of oppression, and for many other families it is a story of hardship and persecution. But it is also a source of pride, because it’s the start of a kind of spiritual pedigree. Crossing stories are rarely written down. They usually exist in

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the oral legends that families tell about how they got here, in which truth often yields to a good story and an illustrious forebear.\footnote{Seabrooke, “The Reporter at Large: The Tree of Me,” 60.}

As Vansina found of aboriginal “family histories,” such tales are important \textit{especially} in recounting recent migrations,\footnote{Vansina, \textit{Oral Tradition}, 156.} in still marking the passage to a new place, and in cementing ties to this new place while acknowledging the old. In world history, European, African, and other continental migrations to North America have been recent and thus continue to work as powerful symbols.

But most ancestors on the North American continent, did they intend to look back? Were they not, as Maxwell found, too busy to look back, or intent on the promised land, the “\textit{framtidslandet}, the land of the future?” This Swedish phrase was found by historian Michael Kammen during a visit to the Museum of American Immigration on Ellis Island in New York. He then asked, “When and how did the United States become a land of the past, a culture with a discernible memory (or with a configuration of recognized pasts)?”\footnote{Kammen, \textit{Mystic Chords of Memory}, 7.} Later, he answers this question by seeing in American memory practices, among many other needs, simultaneous desires to resist change and achieve innovations, to define a huge national group and retain ethnic and personal identities.\footnote{Ibid., 10, 701–703.}

These conflicting impulses are another layer governing thoughts on migrations, and ultimately family history.
Social Practices in All These Layers

Of these influences, all could be considered aspects of communication processes, much as Nesmith noted for record formation,\textsuperscript{146} but they are also aspects of imitation embedded in, and spreading through,\textsuperscript{147} the community of records. Modes of transmission, recontextualization, and pluralization form part of the setting of family history, and form, in terms of records, archivalization and later processes of using records. "Setting" returns us to Maxwell, his choice of locale as a framing mechanism for uncovering obscured family history. For him, finding records required shifting stories and objects (memory texts) to clear some vision of a nation of immigrants who moved quickly across a vast geographical area. Unlike the migration stories of clans studied by Vansina,\textsuperscript{148} the tellers of American accounts do not thank royalty for survival. As Obama did in his speech, they thank their ancestors themselves, and the god that brought their ancestors to North America. Family history in the U.S. connects people to this type of past, and to one another\textsuperscript{149} rather than (usually today) to some royal branch. At the same time, there are benefits from the inscribed past, benefits beyond this initial one: American genealogy also ties practitioners to a lost past in other countries and thus joins them to the larger world; it enables a personal understanding of issues of race, class, family, or religion in an increasingly diverse society; and it offers a means of coping with geographical, cultural, or social mobility.\textsuperscript{150} This is quite a lot to offer and it conforms to what Americans expect of themselves and their nation.

\textsuperscript{146} Nesmith, "Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate," 143.
\textsuperscript{148} Vansina, Oral Tradition, 156.
\textsuperscript{149} Hackstaff, “Deconstructing Kin,” 1.
Social processes complicate these expectations. Genealogy in its most basic form concerns some sort of social stratification. Historically, as Paul Connerton writes, nobility insisted on the quality of hereditary transmission. To be presented at court it was necessary, in principle, to belong to the ancient nobility. From 1732 it was necessary to prove three hundred years of military nobility without known beginning.... Genealogies, which taught the true social position of people, the reason for which they had allied or misallied themselves with this family or that, were highly prized.151

Americans, as the next chapter will show, sought to undo this necessity of shaping social position around ancestry. The first American citizens rejected concepts of nobility, came to prefer the local over the national, the symbolic legacy over the actual. But even within this new accommodation, old habits of hierarchy remained. Writing on democracy in the new country, French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville found that “One hardly ever meets an American who does not want to claim some connection by birth with the first founders of the colonies, and as for offshoots of great English families, I think America is simply full of them.”152 One could speculate that it was the particular Americans he met, and their desire to connect with him as an observer and as a European, that presented the cause for such assertions. Most studies of family history show a different picture than the one de Tocqueville so colorfully reported.153 “[T]he exercise of freedom corresponded

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151 Connerton, How Societies Remember, 85.
nicely with the human impulse to differentiate oneself from others” and the emigration experiences of Americans made them interested in their place in establishing their own position in the new society by knowing more of their families, however poor and in need of migration just to survive, in an older society.\textsuperscript{154} The task for Americans was, and to a certain extent remains, how to both remember the past and act within a world where ancestry might count differently than it once did. So Americans interested in family history at once emulated and disentangled themselves from the types of thinking Connerton exposed.\textsuperscript{155}

While “equalitarian values” made Americans more interested in “present achievements and future prospects” than in looking to the past, they nevertheless chose to remember some parts of the past. Symbols of one’s family, we will see in the next chapter, would be set within Old World traditions and new ones—layered again. Their combination became integral to identity, but there was need for physical representation of some sort. Why? As Connerton answers:

My lineage, my branch, my name, my coat of arms: all these terms, while insistently referring to the qualities inherent in the possessor, express those qualities in an idealized form; they allude in a somewhat etherealised manner to something that is distinctly and directly corporeal: blood…. But if blood proves membership of an ancient group, that membership must also be visibly displayed.\textsuperscript{156}

Signs, though, also could be substituted, one for another. This part of genealogy, its focus being the choice of a particular ethnic group, one ancestor or one place over another, offers another starting point for understanding the lure of the genealogical record. Genealogy, as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich writes, is about “creating.” Discussing the

\textsuperscript{154} Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Crandall, “Historians and Genealogists,” 5.
\textsuperscript{156} Ulrich, “Creating Lineages,” 5.
material inheritance of women in colonial America and the early United States, she states, “Genealogists are not in the business of tracing lineages so much as creating them.” She does not mean here any slight concerned with proof or evidence but rather she looks at intentionality and the habits of the cultures in which genealogists live.\(^{157}\)

In a similar vein, historian Donald Harmon Akenson considers genealogy as “an extended form of narrative” with a “plot-structure” and a “grammar of genealogy.” A “kernel genealogical narrative” can be illustrated by a tombstone showing the names, dates of death, and ages at deaths of two people (a man and his wife, in this order since the wife’s maiden name is not given: “John Teskey” and “Anne, Beloved Wife”). But, looking closer, the “kernel narrative” is actually even more concise than these two names, and more universal than the words carved on a gravestone: All that is needed for the genealogical story to begin is that a woman gives birth to a child who lives. As Akenson writes, the fact that many genealogies begin with a male and sometimes even leave out his female partner reveals that genealogies can be seen as being “dictated by cultural desires rather than by biological reality.”\(^{158}\)

Ulrich concurs, weaving her argument around her status as a historian and a Mormon herself (and thus “called” to know her ancestors). As both, she ponders over her younger self at a family reunion, where her parents instructed her to introduce herself as “daughter of Kenneth who is the son of Nathan who was the son of Hezekiah.” Only later would she acknowledge the fact that she was also the daughter of generations of women. “[P]atrilineal families survive because women [women’s names] drop out in each

\(^{157}\) Connerton, How Societies Remember, 86.
generation.” Ulrich broadens her own kernel narrative and those of other women by finding within the layers of the past ways that women preserve the lines of mothers. Since their names are those of their fathers and husbands, she looks for circumstances in which women keep other records and artifacts that are passed between generations.

Ulrich further posits that each generation shifts the evolving practice of family history. As John Gillis also notes, “Families create and live by their own imaginaries.” The home is the “palace of memory,” the site where so many virtual families are constructed both in paper genealogies and in dreams. The palace now has these appendages (notably the Internet, social networking, digital photography) that reach out without leaving home, that house and disseminate records from a family’s personal archives—an archives now because they become public via these technologies of sharing records. This evolution fits well with an American discourse of change, equality, and various temporal orientations of the self to find one’s identity.

The “cultural imaginary” bolsters present goals and rituals. One of these rituals is the family reunion, which 34% of adults in the U.S. attend each year. To capture reunion dollars, hotels now offer special packages, and states vie to be chosen as reunion sites. Nostalgia tourism in Atlanta alone accounts for twenty million dollars income each year. There are also “planning websites,” such as Temple University’s Family Reunion Institute and the African-American Genealogists’ Family Reunion Primer, which

160 Ibid., 6–10.
161 Ibid., 6–10.
encourage research and social networking. These reunions are considered within two different contexts, one of migration shared by almost all Americans; and the other, from the African-American tradition of “giving back” among extended families dispersed by economic necessity. Here then too is that other layer within family history, a similar “giving back,” that Yakel and Torres found in the communities of genealogists. It is possible then to see in African-American genealogy, from Roots’ 1976 date onward, a model for all populist family history that includes a philosophy of altruism and inclusion, again of democracy desired among Americans in general.

In this type of family history, psychological benefits are promoted. The narratives of the past, told in formal genealogies, scrapbooks, or around the dinner table, are set forth as part of healthy self-development. Here communication is again attentive not only to narratives of migration but also to strength, individualism, and cooperation with others, in short again to fortitude and sacrifice.

As sociologist Michael Erben confirmed, “In searching for and finding ancestors one is discovering both communality and individuality.” This discovery “necessarily” returns again to boundaries of inclusion, exclusion, and desires: “Who is part of a family

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166 Yakel and Torres, “Genealogists as a ‘Community of Records,’” 98.
and who is not? Whose version of the family tree prevails?”¹⁶⁹ “Genealogical worthiness” is dependent on various systems measuring social distance and constituting social memory.¹⁷⁰ In the next chapters, the layers of these variously defined memories, meanings, and practices frame the history given, the methods chosen, and the voices heard. The concept of layers is meant to provide a focus on looking to obvious and hidden influences, just as family historians and album makers are told to do.


CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTICES
AND FORMS OF FAMILY HISTORY

Mr. HENRY SEWALL (SENT BY
Mr. HENRY SEWALL, HIS FATHER
IN YE SHIP ELISABETH & DORCAS
CAPT. WATTS COMMANDER)
ARRIVED AT BOSTON 1634.
WINTERED AT IPSWICH. HELP'D
BEGIN THIS PLANTATION, 1635
FURNISHING ENGLISH SERVANTS
NEAT. CATTEL, & PROVISIONS.
MARRIED MRS. JANE DUMMER
MARCH YE 25, 1646
DIED MAY, YE 16, 1700
AETAT. 86. HIS FRUTFULL
VINE, BEING THUS DISJOIND
FELL TO YE GROUND JANUARY
YE 13; FOLLOWING; AETAT 74
PSAL.27.10

(Gravestone inscription of Henry and Jane
[Demmer] Sewall, Newbury, Massachusetts)¹

Women were often ignored in
eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records,
even official ones. Pennsylvania-German women
fared better in person records, such as fraktur.²

¹ Lauren K. Gabel, "‘By this you see we are but dust’ The Gravestone Art and Epitaphs of Our Ancestors," in Simons and Benes, The Art of Family, 150.
² Earnest and Earnest, To the Latest Posterity, 40.
The practices and forms of family history in the United States are located in an evolution of ideas and meanings given to families themselves as well as in local and national records that hold memories of the past. The gravestone writing above tells some of this history: a society that prized migration, an active role in the creation of a new place, marriage, religion, and also inscribed memory itself. The other quote tells something too of these practices: who was permitted a place in records. These are the subjects of the history of genealogy in the United States, subjects which form the setting for exploring family history in the present.

**European Ancestors**

To speak of genealogy in the U.S. is to begin usually in New England, Pennsylvania, or Virginia. These were the places where both the society in which we live today and the records we live by were first shaped. The people who lived here achieved a "genealogical worthiness" in that they began inscribed family history in North America, leaving a more permanent trace than did other earlier settlers (the much earlier, migratory people who today are called Native Americans, Greenlanders, and Icelanders et al.).

The first European colonists in the 1600s brought a long tradition in which family history was important to the nobility. "Rights of landownership, social relations, and the personal status of individuals in their relations to one another, and rights of succession to hereditary political office" were all reasons for the elite to know the past. But the early colonists were also part of other practices in which common people lived the dictates of family history: Their names were usually identified by their place in a family or their

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work; their lives and work were shaped by their positions in the family and the family’s place in society; and religious laws fixed the make-up of the family.⁶

Inscribed family memory was key to various cultural practices from medieval Europe onwards, a culture that scholars have described as “fundamentally memorial.”⁷ Like the descendants of Mr. Sewall above, the more wealthy among the Europeans had their ancestors’ names carved in stone, or nurtured the marks of the past in landmarks or heraldic signs on deeds.⁸ By the fifteenth century, the revolutionary art of printing extended the likelihood of having a book in which to write family information.⁹

The practice of writing genealogical information in “calendars prefixed to missals and books of hours” began in England as early as the middle of the fifteenth century.¹⁰ Several other changes also encouraged a genealogically attuned culture. One was the 1538 English edict that all births, marriages, and deaths should be recorded in parish registers; followed in 1598 with the requirement that “copies of all entries had to be sent annually, at Easter, to the bishop’s registry.”¹¹ Another was the first visitations in the 1530s by members of the College of Arms, who considered personal knowledge, muniments, and customs in their judgment on the suitability of various families’ claims to coats of arms.¹²

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⁹ Currer Briggs and Gambier, *Debrett’s Family Historian*, 33.
As noted in Chapter Two, a “genealogical gaze” grew also in other parts of Europe where private archives came to hold more and more family records. The early Renaissance Tuscans were earnest record keepers in their ricordanze, books in which family finances, chronicles, and lineage information were shaped as “an agency for civic and political success.”

Two institutional factors favored the making and preserving of these libri di famiglia. First, Florentine families could continue playing a civic role only when private documentation of the family’s past accomplishments was transmitted from father to son. Second, the fiscal system “promoted private recordkeeping because tax authorities … had access to the bookkeeping of the heads of family.”

Venetians, on the other hand, had “less interest … in collecting and keeping evidence of ancestral status, because the ruling class in Venice was defined a priori.” They “felt the need to trace and transfer the political and moral patrimony of the lineage, but that they did not do this by writing single-family ricordanze but by relying on government archives.”

With elements of “commonplace book, an account book, a chronicle, and a diary,” the ricordanze found approximate equivalents in the livre de raison in France, the Rekordsbuch in Germany, and the rekenboek in the Netherlands. In later

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generations, the *album amicorum* or friendship albums and diaries allowed a gathering of literature, poems, and writings on the self, including family history.

The Renaissance also ushered in another form: the album holding art works. Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) kept *ricordanze*; two of his accounts in this form remain for scholars to study today. But he also advocated keeping works of art in albums. This method of storing works and writings influenced proto-museums and libraries. Many others followed Vasari’s advice, and such albums came to constitute the backbone of every collection, or “cabinet,” of the Renaissance into the present. The keeping of drawings and small paintings of family members became parts of the albums of the elite.

In short, these forms show how the sixteenth century witnessed the “start of collections of genealogies in manuscript and printed volumes.” A “genealogical imagination” was also shifting slightly to a more vernacular form, with appeal to more and more people. As Wendell Garrett observes, “Sufficient evidence survives to show that some poorer families were equally interested in their origins and connections.” He cites a Devon yeoman’s account from 1593. Similarly, the practice of writing family names and dates in Bibles came to full bloom with seventeenth-century improvements in printing and the likelihood that more and more people could have such a book. Richard Gough’s *History of Myddle* (1700–1702) shows one group of people who were the

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22 DeCandido, “Out of the Question: Scrapbooks, the Smiling Villains.”
23 Currey-Briggs and Gambier, *Debrett’s Family Historian*, 33.
recipients of these centuries of transmitted family history, “Shropshire farmers, craftsmen and laborers … fascinated by their ancestors and by the family histories of their neighbors.”

**Early Colonial Family History**

Although some settlers sought to abandon these traditions of their previous homes, others emulated the European forms of telling about the past. They carved names on gravestones, etched family initials in silverware, painted family likenesses on canvas, or printed family names on bookplates. Colonists also wrote about family heritage in letters and in commonplace books. At least two New England men, eager with “personal curiosity and desire of connections to the past,” relied on relatives in England and Ireland, respectively, to furnish them with genealogical information.

In New England and Pennsylvania, a religious tenor was apparent in family histories. They borrowed biblical language in telling about themselves, and believed in the notion of a “master record” kept somewhere. One of the first published genealogical works, that of Roger Clap (1609–1691), justified a knowing of the past in a desire to

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Errata statement

On page 77, footnote 34 should be moved to follow the fifth sentence in the first full paragraph, and to read as follows: In the Richards family, a fourteen-page gathering begins with a daughter’s birth in 1661 England, and then shows later births, deaths, and marriages recorded in Hartford, Connecticut (1663–1714).\textsuperscript{34}

The next paragraph should read: Another handwritten record of birth, marriages, and deaths, that of the Flint, Buttrick, and Brown families, was given the prominence of a title, and called in a way entirely recognizable to today’s family historians and album makers, “In memory of the family Flints by John Flint (1722–1792).”\textsuperscript{35} Other families recorded information on whatever paper was at hand. Someone in the William Hyde Family, for example, purchased vellum-bound notebooks, dated them 1710, 1713, and 1715, and recorded births, marriages, and deaths that occurred between 1690 and 1754.\textsuperscript{36} The New Jersey Joshua Quickshall family….
instruct, counsel, direct and command his “children and his children’s children to the Latest Posterity.” To make more forceful his work, Clap borrowed from the book of Hebrews: “He being dead, yet speaketh.”

Writing family information in a Bible made formally sacred the connections of religion and genealogy. Extant Bibles reflect on the multi-generational continuation of these associations. Two early colonial New England Bibles containing family history are those of the Samuel Andrews Family, dating from 1625 to 1790 (recorded in a Bible published in London in 1599), and that of the James Richards family, dating from 1661 to 1714 (recorded in a Bible printed in London in 1599). Their imprints show the reliance on English publications, but most of the inscriptions all occurred in the colonies.

In the Richards family, a fourteen-page gathering begins with a daughter’s birth in 1661 England, and then shows later births, deaths, and marriages recorded in Hartford, Connecticut (1663–1714).

Other families recorded information on whatever paper was at hand. Someone in the William Hyde Family, for example, purchased vellum-bound notebooks, dated them 1710, 1713, and 1715, and recorded births, marriages, and deaths that occurred between 1690 and 1754.

Another handwritten record of birth, marriages, and deaths, that of the Flint, Buttrick, and Brown families, was given the prominence of a title, and called in a way entirely recognizable to today’s family historians and album makers, “In memory of the family Flints by John Flint (1722–1792).” The New Jersey Joshua Quickshall family

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33 Roger Clap, Memories of Capt. Roger Clap (Boston: B. Green, 1731), as quoted in Earnest and Earnest, To the Latest Posterity, xvii; Hebrews 11:4.
34 The Samuel Andrews Bible is housed at Harvard University’s Houghton Library; the Richards Bible is located at the New England Historic and Genealogical Society (NEHGS), Boston, MA.
35 John Flint, 1722–1792, “In memory of the family of the Flints,” “Mss A S53,” the Lemuel Shattuck Papers, NEHGS.
36 William Hyde Family Papers, 1652–1816 (Mss. 653); Tim Salls, emails to author, December 8, 2008 and May 7, 2009.
(1735–1743) wrote their history within a copy of Richard Allestree’s *The Whole Duty of Man* (London, 1677).\(^{37}\)

Colonials in Virginia and the Carolinas also recorded dates of births, marriages, and deaths in Bibles, commonplace books, and other bound books; they too “displayed armorial bearings on seals, tombstones, silver, and bookplates.”\(^{38}\) However, in general, the slaveholding Southerners placed less emphasis on religion, and more emphasis on status and family honor.\(^{39}\) The Virginians, in particular, became known for choosing names that represented kinship, often preferring the last name of a family for the first name of a child.\(^{40}\) As noted in Chapter Two, the Virginian William Byrd II had a pedigree prepared at the College of Heralds in London in 1702.\(^{41}\) A “Carolina Herald” was even appointed, though he never visited North America, leaving unanswered various complaints about the inappropriate use of symbols that should have been restricted to the aristocracy.\(^{42}\)

**Late Colonial American Genealogy**

In this European convention, sometime before 1771, Thomas Jefferson sought the official benediction of the College of Arms. The colonial Jefferson was diffident: “I have what I am told are the family arms but on what authority I know not.” There is no indication that he ever heard anything in reply and not until 1786 did he purchase a seal showing these arms. His motto translated from Latin today reads “He who gives life

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\(^{41}\) Bockstruck, “Four Centuries of Genealogy,” 162; Unidentified compiler, Genealogical chart of the Brid (Bird and Byrd) family, Mss6:2 B9965:1, Virginia Historical Society.

\(^{42}\) Wagner, *English Genealogy*, 303, 311.
gives liberty.” Jefferson also created other seals, notably one first used in 1790, bearing the inscription “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.” Likely with many open books before him, he “created” family memory, foregoing the authority of the College of Arms.

Jefferson’s insignia would ultimately adorn books about him as well as one of the gates to the Monticello cemetery, an apt placement with regards to family history and ownership of this past. In his fabrication and use of these marks, the author of so much that had to do with equality took a hierarchical view in which power was located in displays of status, philosophy, and one might even say religious justification. His great attention to building Monticello and the University of Virginia, tangible and grand landmarks of his life, is also representative about much else that was complexly and also simply the genealogy of “becoming American”: He crafted his history around these achievements, not around his family.

Yet, for us today, the complexity of his life centers on the memory of his own family, especially his forty-year relationship with African-American slave Sally Hemings. For Jefferson, the sense of an extended yet illicit and obscured family was generational: Sally’s mother and Jefferson’s wife, Martha Wayles Jefferson, were half sisters; a number of Hemingses came with Martha on her marriage as “part of the family”; members of this generation of Hemingses and subsequent ones became Thomas

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Jefferson’s butler, valet, and personal servants. In later generations, some lived in the area of Jefferson’s beloved Monticello, the area, if we are to define ownership as based not only on records but also on oral tradition, a place also beloved by them—“their” family home. Those departing from this area of Virginia mostly passed as white. They became other families, but these two overriding names of Hemings and Jefferson lasted entwined over time. As one descendant recalled, she had learned of this heritage from “lips to ears, down through the generations.” In the worlds of these descendants, but also in the larger world where some people at least knew their story, this genealogy shaped concepts of family around what it meant to be descendants of slaves and those who enslaved them. The Jefferson genealogy remains a touchstone for issues of family history and its American shape.

Narratives created around family memory still solidify positions of power. Witness the great interest in the genealogies of George W. Bush, John Kerry, and others who seek high office. Even in smaller arenas, such as New Orleans and Mobile, genealogical information accompanies all the biographies of debutantes and royalty in Carnival courts. But especially in the continuing story of Jefferson and Hemings, dramas “of inheritance of bodies, property, and stories” can still be seen. In 2002, for example, the white descendants of Thomas and Martha Jefferson voted to deny

49 Gordon-Reed, interview.
50 Hackstaff, “Genealogy as Social Memory,” 1.
53 Donna J. Haraway, Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouseTM (New York: Routledge, 1997), 213; see especially her chapter entitled “Race: Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture. It’s All in the Family: Biological Kinship Categories in the Twentieth-Century United States.”
membership in the Society that runs Monticello to the Jefferson-Hemings descendants, and thus to exclude them from the privilege of burial in a cemetery there. They “concluded that the historical and scientific evidence was ‘insufficient.’”

There are dozens of books and films about the family. There are also other legacies concerned with Jefferson’s real and symbolic choices in family history: one came in the form of his books, that, in 1815, he sold to the Library of Congress. Before this time, the library had been a law library, since that was the philosophy of the nation—a democracy ruled by law. Jefferson argued that the nation deserved a broader “understanding of legislation based upon all learning.” Some of this learning concerned genealogy: the *Domesday Book* (1733), Thomas Wotton’s *Baronetage of England* (1771), *Peerage of Ireland* (1725), and many other French, Italian, and English imprints on family history.

By 1771, the date when Jefferson looked to England for proof of his family seal (and possibly ideas for his self-designed seal from the books he had), his fellow colonists in New England and Pennsylvania were beginning a different approach in transmitting family lineage, primarily one that relied upon homely artifacts, inscribing memories that

55 Ibid.
began in the colonies. The first three North American printed genealogies carry this more private, self-referential tradition of recordkeeping sentiment. Those cited as being “first” among the published works are the abovementioned Memoirs of Roger Clap (1731); a broadside printed to show the records of the Bollinger family (1763); and the more straightforward book of Luke Stebbins (1771). In this latter work, Stebbins defended his own and others’ interest in genealogy since it might “give demonstration of the power, faithfulness, and goodness of God to their ancestor; excite in their children and children’s children, thankfulness, hope and dependence on the God of their forefathers.” Family history might also instruct generations to follow in knowing “where their ancestors have led pious and religious lives, been exemplary in their conversation….“ He defended genealogy as a means by which compilers might “excite in their descendants a laudable ambition to imitate those things that were excellent, praiseworthy and amiable in them.”

In this environment, the “cheaper and more personal visual remembrance[s] of … ancestry” came to replace “the old decorated arms and family portraits.” Watercolors, samplers, and the “family registers” eventually held distinct motifs and styles, differing by towns, as well as differing from those in Europe. Many of these artifacts were

61 Earnest and Earnest, To the Latest Posterity, xvii, 6–8; Bockstruck, “Four Centuries of Genealogy,” 163. Clap’s family history was an addition to his Memoirs in a section added by James Blake between 1720 and 1731. Luke Stebbins, The Genealogy of Samuel Stebbins and His Wife Hannah, from the year 1701 to 1771 (Hartford: Ebenezer Watson, 1771).
created not for asserting status but rather as efforts of “straightforward record keeping” and were only displayed within the home.\textsuperscript{65}

\textbf{The Early Republic to 1840s}

When the hostilities of the American Revolution ended and the new nation began, these mostly private traditions continued to proliferate. But the sentiments circling around genealogy were not without controversy. In 1783, the officers of the Continental Army began a widely publicized fight over adequate compensation of veterans.\textsuperscript{66} Their “Society of the Cincinnati” was named in honor of the ancient Roman Cincinnatus, “who had left his plow to defend his country but afterward returned to his farm.” The populist meanings of this name, suggesting as it did a nation of independent farmers, did not prohibit the society from specifying that membership be hereditary. “At a time when the American Revolution had not only overturned monarchical rule but also occasioned attacks upon the doctrine of primogeniture in several statutes, this naturally struck many as the first step instead toward an American nobility.”\textsuperscript{67} Many feared that such a society would “breed a new ruling dynasty.”\textsuperscript{68}

Jefferson’s opposition to the group is another of his legacies. As he wrote to George Washington in 1784, American institutions deserved to be built upon “the natural equality of man, the denial of every preeminence but that annexed to legal office, &

\textsuperscript{65} John Demos, “Introduction,” in Simons and Benes, \textit{The Art of Family}, xii.
\textsuperscript{67} Davies, \textit{Patriotism on Parade}, 3–4.
particularly the denial of a preeminence by birth.”69 The debate thus set the stage for a
different pattern for genealogy—one set somewhere between the elitist tradition of the
officials, the religious temperament of New England and Pennsylvania, and the
hierarchical society of the slave-holding South. The problems of the veterans were
ultimately solved by legislative powers. The primogeniture requirement for the Society
and the westward expansion of the United States ultimately made the group less
pervasive.70

This debate coincided with other continuing discussions on inheritability. Article
II of the 1787 constitution ruled out, for example “corruption of blood,” the idea that
children could be punished for the crimes of their parents. New laws also prohibited other
kinds of inherited status for white males.71 By 1791, throughout the South, primogeniture
was abolished in an effort largely led by Jefferson. The inheritance of the oldest son and
the exclusion of the younger sons Jefferson attacked as “an evil.”72

All slaves, most free men of color, and most women would not benefit from this
initial democratizing force, but local settings came to form the parameter of a more
appealing concept to new citizens who also feared the larger national government.73

“Pride had to be narrowly local before it could ever be national,” Ola Elizabeth Winslow

70 Davies, Patriotism on Parade, 19.
71 Beatrice Gottlieb, The Family in the Western World from the Black Death to the Industrial Age (New
72 Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Vol. 2: Geography (Chapel
Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), s.v., “Primogeniture,” retrieved from netlibrary.com,
73 Bodnar, Remaking America, 28–29.
wrote when describing the birth of an American interest in “her own landscape and her own heroes possessively.”

Still in this period, the early symbols were associated with the American Revolution, and here, northeastern men, the “antiquarians,” especially took the lead in amassing documents of the early colony and republic. These collectors worked together feverishly, in what David Van Tassel describes as “documania.” The Massachusetts Historical Society (1791), the New York Historical Society (1804), and the American Antiquarian Society (1812) were the three most influential groups, but a number of other state and local societies came into being at this time. Their activities were anchored by several events of the early nineteenth century including the fiftieth anniversary (1826) of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and a call for printing the records of the early colony of Massachusetts (1853).

The historical societies ultimately made up what has come to be called the historic manuscript tradition, and are thus set within the camp that deals with private records or personal papers alongside a few records from the public realm. Their members placed genealogical research locally within both these camps, wholeheartedly encouraging the advancement of local libraries, local public records, and local civic commemorations—all

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of which served in the transmission of records and collective memories. These innovations offered a place for studying the past and a place for historical and genealogical records.

Founded in 1824, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania distinguished itself not only in this sort of preservation and transmission, but also as another step in the democratizing force set against hereditary practices. Adding new words for old ones, its president in 1825 boldly suggested a change to that society’s constitution by removing all references to hereditary ties, such as the word “native,” and replacing them with terms referring to chronological precedence: “predecessors” in the place of “forefathers,” and “early periods of our history” instead of “history of our ancestors.”

This change of language was one part of an entire mindset that looked to the ideals of the first colonists as guides from the past. One of the New England collectors interested in this topic was the sickly John Farmer (1789–1838), who from his New Hampshire home, became “the most distinguished Genealogist and Antiquary” of the U.S. in this period. In 1829, after long years of consulting those who were “the most prominent, as well as the more humble,” he published The Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England, “the first genealogical volume published in America that

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82 Griffith, Serving History in a Changing World, 21. This effort, however, also muddied the waters when later leaders of the Society considered genealogists as less appealing users.


extended beyond one person or a single family.” Farmer also gathered about him a
network of colleagues, who worked together in a common pursuit and were conscious of
standards. These communal networks, rules, and democratization of the ownership of
genealogical memory were further steps in making an American-styled genealogy. “[B]y
the 1830s and 1840s, genealogy was more frequently associated with erudite rather than
aristocratic pursuits.” Moreover, the antiquarians who gathered around Farmer worked to
stem “the decay of public documents and private monuments, [and] instituted means for
preserving them.” By the late 1830s, the antiquarians were commended not just for
family or local history, but for “collecting and preserving the fading memorials of our
little democracies.”

A part of these “little democracies” was located in family registers. A group of
Germans, especially those who settled in Pennsylvania in a place they called the Ephrata
Cloister, created “some of the earliest and finest, most classic hand drawn” of
genealogical art and records in the Americas. The Bollinger family broadside (one of the
first three printed genealogies mentioned above) came from this group. The motifs were
ones that “retained Old World customs,” depicting in borders the “names and images of
birds and flowers from Germany.” Yet, these fraktur and registers show the palimpsest
quality governing the evolution of genealogical sentiments. They incorporated older
visual images, but they also presented private recordkeeping within a domestic art piece
where women’s names appeared alongside those of men. Some women themselves

86 Ibid., 420–434.
87 Ibid., 433.
88 Ibid.; Review of Historical Sketch of Amherst, in the County of Hillsborough, in New Hampshire, from
its first Settlement to the Year 1837, by John Farmer,” North American Review 46, no. 99 (April 1838):
536–538.
89 Earnest and Earnest, To the Latest Posterity, 6–8; Gloria Seaman Allen, Family Record: Genealogical
became practiced calligraphers and made these registers. In addition, the Pennsylvanian Germans listed families as beginning from the date of American immigration. Like the colonists in the late eighteenth century, the calligraphers redefined representation of genealogy, showing the family without European origins.\(^9\) As noted in Chapter Two, this was a land that looked to the future, not back to the old country. Or, as Rob Kroes wrote of later Dutch immigrants to the U.S. whose photographs he studied, such images were “not pictures of the present, or records of the past; they are visions of the future.”\(^9\)

The New England registers of this period, like the watercolors and other artifacts that preceded them, were more classical in design than the Pennsylvanian ones, but they held more local motifs, identifiable by towns. Local New England motifs developed as schools taught girls embroidery and painting, and teachers looked to the family for subjects. Unity among kin was shown by “interlocking chains, by adjacent circles, by standing architectural structures, and by planted grids or fields of names.”\(^9\) The heart, or a series of hearts joined or superimposed upon one another, was used to hold the names of family members, and this depiction of a linked group of people became common in Massachusetts. (Before the end of the seventeenth century, hearts were restricted in use to a meaning concerned with a devotional Christian life.) The family tree, an image dating to the fourteenth century, was also used throughout the new country but did not exhibit as much variation by locale or differ from English use—suggesting something about its

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\(^9\) Kroes, *Photographic Memories*, 52.  
consistency and potency as a symbol. Its symbolism, so accessible in nature, also evoked the practicality of a movement of lines forward and backward in time.

Trends of Mid Nineteenth to Late Nineteenth Century

As the nineteenth century progressed, the handmade formats came to be joined by printed family registers. Allegorical figures of Hope, Faith, Peace, Charity, Fame, and other elements such as cornucopias, pelicans feeding their young, decorative floral ornamentation, children, and beehives ornamented these works, copying and adding to the work of the calligraphers of the hand-drawn registers. Printers and designers also drew upon the symbols of new organizations that were developing at the time, linking these new public realms with private memory. The early printed registers served as a way in which each family could insert their own genealogies within images of the larger society just as album makers of the twenty-first century do.

As in the colonial period, the church records and those of the local governments of the early republic may be considered the only public records in proximity to most citizens in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In these locally accessible records, each denomination, sometimes each ethnic group within a denomination, and each government office followed different practices. Each town or city might keep a book showing all the records together—probate alongside arrests, and so forth. Systematic registration of births and deaths would not come to a handful of states until the mid to late nineteenth century and not to all states until the twentieth century. But there were

95 Barnhill, “‘Keep Sacred the Memory of Your Ancestors,’” 60–74.
97 Anderson, “Colonial English Research.”
exceptions: as a Spanish colony in 1790, New Orleans had begun civil registration of various passages of life of its citizens.\(^98\) Boston began civil registration in 1848, Philadelphia in 1860, Pittsburgh in 1870, and Baltimore in 1875.\(^99\) The family historians interviewed for this project believe that the northeastern private traditions of genealogy rested at least in part on the fact that public records were not available with any consistency. They believe that the Spanish and the Catholic Church in New Orleans and Mobile, for example, were such omnipresent record keepers that there was little need for even the family name displayed in needlework. Similarly, Robert M. Senkewicz, co-editor of \textit{Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535–1846},\(^100\) found that genealogical interest in colonial and Mexican California did not display the same sort of material manifestation that one finds in the British colonies. He suggests that there were conversations within families about the use and even the manipulation of information given to authorities, but not a systematic gathering of family materials by individuals.\(^101\)

From extant genealogical artifacts and private records, it is difficult to say how systematic in general the New Englanders and the Pennsylvania Germans were. Still the calligraphers, embroiderers, painters, and other artisans, or those commissioning them, did work to keep family memories. It was these types of people that John Farmer visited, that he included in his book in order to make genealogy also concerned with “humble”

\(^101\) Robert M. Senkewicz, email to author, January 22, 2009.
The formation of the New England Historic Genealogical Society in 1845 and the creation of its Register two years later legitimized such genealogical pursuits among a broader population than in Europe. However, by the 1840s, Farmer’s colleague, New Englander Lemuel Shattuck (1793–1859) was finding both public and private recordkeeping lacking. His difficulties came despite the fact that he was a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the American Antiquarian Society, the New Hampshire Historical Society, and the American Statistical Association. This latter organizational affiliation is particularly important in joining an antiquarian and largely private recordkeeping tradition to a public recordkeeping tradition. Shattuck became the “father of public health,” authoring the first vital statistics law in the U.S., the Massachusetts law, which in turn became the model for other states. He also “introduced numerous” other measures arguing for the “preservation and publication of city documents, creation of a municipal library, and preparation of an annual city register.”

Shattuck is also one among many understudied individuals in the history of genealogy. His 1841 Complete System of Family Registration prescribed the “many advantages of a good Family Register” which could “furnish the evidence of relationship, settle the rights of connexions, prevent disputes about property, expensive litigation,

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103 Ibid., 409, 433.
anxiety of mind, and contention and alienation in families, which too often take place.‖

He also later issued *Blank Book Forms for Family Registers* (1856).

Many of Shattuck’s ideas and his forms incorporate aspects of the traditions of commonplace books and friendship albums. He also addressed the idea that family records could be kept in private. But the mid to late nineteenth century profusion of Bibles meant, in Lemuel Shattuck’s mind and experience, that there was no one repository for records. “Bibles are now so common that there is seldom found one which by way of distinction is called the family Bible, and which is peculiarly suited, or can contain proper forms for a family record.”

Yet, photography’s invention in the 1830s offered new memory forms and also new places for keeping family history. In the late 1840s, printers such as Currier and Ives and Auguste Gast published the “Family Photograph Register” or a “Photograph Family Record” with spaces for photographs or printed colored illustrations. A common, unstubbred blank book was first used for photographs in the United States in the 1850s. These new albums borrowed aspects of earlier forms such as the borders of the registers and added the possibility of photographs.

The mid nineteenth century also saw the beginnings of family reunions where these albums could be shared. The reunions came to represent “a kind of mini-social movement, a voluntaristic and moral crusade among middle-class white Protestants, who, caught in the anomalies of rapid social change, sought to comprehend their situation and

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110 Horton, “Historical Photo Albums and Their Structures,” 14. Jane Rutherston (“Victorian Album Structures”) found that the bulk of British patents for albums and scrapbooks dated from 1860 to 1900.
control their future.” Summoning “the wandering tribe to be one again,” especially those who had left the northeast to settle the Midwest, led to the creation of “collective genealogical efforts,” models for later individuals interested in family history.  

At the same time, antiquarians grew ever more busy producing county histories, whose narratives often included accounts of early leaders and their descendants. Various catalogs and dictionaries of New England and Virginia were the prototypes of these volumes. By 1862, when William Whitmore compiled the Handbook of American Genealogy, Being a Catalogue of Family Histories and Publications Containing Genealogical Information, his chosen 108 genealogies were supplemented by sixty-two local histories.

The Civil War (1861–1865) polarized these local loyalties, but as Michael Kammen explains, for the two decades following such bitterness, there was an unstated national “imperative” to heal “sectional scars and political wounds.” At the same time, Southerners sought to address the loss of records due to fires and destruction, thus formalizing discussions of records and their storage, including sources for family history. The Midwestern states also became leaders within archival and genealogical efforts, and maintained a strong connection between the two camps. For example, from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, both a state and a private repository, Daniel Steele Durrie published the Bibliographia Genealogica Americana in 1868.

114 Bibliographia Genealogica Americana (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1868) is an alphabetical index to American genealogies and pedigrees contained in state, county and town histories, printed genealogies, and kindred works; Bockstruck, “Four Centuries of Genealogy,” 164.
The popularity of photographs and bound volumes to hold them continued to increase.\footnote{Sarah McNair Vosmeier, “Picturing Love and Friendship: Photograph Albums and Networks of Affection in the 1860s,” in Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, The Scrapbook in American Life, 209–210.} Beginning in the 1860s, spaces for \textit{carte-de-visite} photographs were incorporated into some Bibles. C. F. Short of St. Louis published one form of such a Bible/album with spaces for ten photographs. Kurz and Allison of Chicago published another, holding spaces for the photographs of parents and children. Their birth and death dates were to be set within the image of an open book. Other publishers of Bibles with blank pages headed “Marriages,” “Births,” and “Deaths” were Isaiah Thomas, Holbrook and Fessenden, B. and J. Collins, Gay Brothers and Company, and the American Bible Society. A number of still other firms created pre-designed pages within their various religious titles.\footnote{Examples of these published Bibles are found in the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois; see also Bamhill, ‘‘Keep Sacred the Memory of Your Ancestors,’’ 64.}

As early as 1861, photography journals urged their readers to collect their multiplying \textit{carte-de-visite} images into albums produced especially for keeping memories of family and friends. The \textit{carte-de-visite} album became an established institution by the 1870s, and albums for cabinet photographs remained popular until World War I. An 1872 proclamation by \textit{Godey’s Lady’s Book} proclaimed this ascendancy of form for family images, noting that “Photograph albums have become not only a luxury for the rich but a necessity for the people. The American family would be poor indeed who could not afford a photograph album.”\footnote{“Centre-Table Gossip: Photographic Albums,” \textit{Godey’s Lady’s Book} 64 (February 1862): 208; Siegel, “‘Miss Domestic’ and ‘Miss Enterprise,’” 254.}

One of these was an album, devised in 1864 by a Dr. A. H. Platt, and called:

\textit{The Photograph Family Record of HUSBAND, WIFE, AND CHILDREN; ADAPTED TO RECORDING IN A PLAIN, BRIEF AND INTELLIGENT}
MANNER, The Name, Birth-place, Date of Nativity, Descent, Names of Parents, Number of Brothers and Sisters, Education, Occupation, Politics, Religion, Marriage, Stature, Weight, Habit, Complexion, Color of Eyes and Hair, Health, Time and Place of Death, Disease, Age and Place of Interment of Each Member of Any Family, With Album Leaves for the Insertion of Photographs of the Same.  

Borrowing perhaps from Shattuck, Platt included places in which to write “authentic” signatures and to place not one but two copies of marriage certificates. Additional marriages were to have their own albums so that the family stayed intact even after the death of one spouse and the remarriage of the remaining partner. The album also had room for information about eleven children. Platt suggested that upon maturity each child be given his or her own album. Another album maker was the printer William H. Shepard, whose Family Memorial (1876) could, when completed, arrange genealogical, biographical and statistical records of ancestors and descendants set within even more categories than those of Shattuck and Platt, and included a request to supply a “view of homestead.” The goals for these registers will be found again in the heritage albums: their emphasis on handwriting, contributions from family members, and depictions of living spaces—replicated in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century albums.

The 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia broadened the appeal for both this new pictorial information and older forms of memory, especially printed information. A Joint Resolution in Congress asked that each county compile a local history, to be filed in print or manuscript in the clerk’s office of the said county, an additional copy in print or manuscript to be filed in the office of the Librarian Of Congress,

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118 Extant copies of this are found in the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography, Sipley Collection and the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. See Siegel, “‗Miss Domestic’ and ‗Miss Enterprise,’” 318n23.
119 Siegel, “‗Miss Domestic’ and ‗Miss Enterprise,’” 258–263.
120 A copy of The Family Memorial is in the NEHGS.
to the intent that a complete record may thus be obtained of the progress of our institutions during the first centennial of our existence.  

These local histories again contained genealogies of first settlers. By the 1880s, various Blue-Gray reunions celebrated Civil War survivors and their descendants, thus fracturing the nation but also making another cause for genealogical pursuits. At the same time, increasing immigration from southern and eastern Europe began to change the way Americans viewed all such family history endeavors. A nativist sentiment arose: Those with ties back more than one generation boasted of a more rightful place in the U.S. Society as a whole became consumed by eugenics and “the ideology of race in its broadest sense.”

The Late Nineteenth Century to the 1960s

The post-Civil-War era brought quests for ancestral lineage set within this sentiment of ethnocentricity. But a legitimate family history still strived to assert itself, especially in new periodicals. The William and Mary Quarterly (1892) was such a journal, hailed as one of the first scholarly journals in the U.S., and also one of the first to insist upon proof for family history.

Technologies were changing private lives, as well. The Victorian parlor was transformed into the living room in which mass-produced goods could be at the disposal of the family and their visitors. The family scrapbooks now competed with the

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121 This joint resolution was passed March 13, 1876 and also issued as a proclamation by Ulysses S. Grant. See James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. 7, Pt. 1: Ulysses S. Grant, rev. edition (Washington, DC: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1904), 565; Russo, Keepers of Our Past, 80.
122 Kammen, “Some Patterns and Meanings of Memory Distortion,” 334.
124 Mills, “Genealogy in the ‘Information Age,’” 263.
gramophone. The latter was even suggested as some sort of “family record… [presented] in their own voices … the aural family album.” This invention of Thomas Edison did not catch on, but it would be recognizable today to those who buy software to make “talking scrapbooks” or create online albums with voice and music capabilities.

The proliferation of libraries at the end of the nineteenth century created a more central place for genealogical sources. The privately written family histories came to be housed in local repositories, the beginnings of those departments called “special collections,” some of which also held records. Expanding on the resolutions that came from the 1876 Centennial, the libraries replaced the clerk’s office as the repository for genealogies and “glory albums” featuring business or professional people in flattering photographs. A few of these new libraries also developed reader services especially for family historians. Here was another passage from private to public set within traditions encouraged by democracy and technologies.

More historical societies were founded at this time. Women’s rejection from some of these societies spurred an organized response. When the Sons of the American Revolution rejected female members in 1890, the DAR was formed; and shortly afterwards, the Colonial Dames (1891). These and other groups afforded women expanded public roles, provided a tremendous amount of energy to various activities, and changed the public face of genealogy.

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129 Earnest and Earnest, *To the Latest Posterity*, 40–41.
As discussed in Chapter Two, members of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, whose early history represented the new American approach to the past, had proposed admitting women in 1825. But only in 1860 did this become a reality. Other previously all male groups followed. By 1897, a few “audacious” men dared even to bring “up the subject of opening the membership to women” within the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS). The reaction of the men hearing such an argument was “haughty and dignified, if not decidedly frosty.” Some said that women were not eligible since there were not legally “persons.” But one member offered his opinion that women were naturally interested in the records of family history—more so, probably, than men—and he moved that the Council consider applications from women and to pass judgment upon them on the same conditions as they applied to male applicants.

In order for the New England society to vote on the admission for women, members were obliged to go to legislature to “secure an act by the General Court.” This was accomplished in 1898. In legal terms, women could be “persons” when they were elite enough to be voted upon for membership in the NEHGS. In 1898, thirty-six women immediately were allowed to join this prestigious group.

The sex-segregated groups, however, remained critical to women and to genealogy. Women’s individual and collective impulses resulted in the expansion of libraries and the creation of information about the past. Women’s work became critical

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135 Ibid., 41.
136 That universal suffrage was won nationally by first securing the right to vote in local elections is discussed in a number of histories. See for example, Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 181.
to family history, one arena in which leadership historically crossed between public and private spheres.

Gender considerations were not, however, the most pronounced battles among the communities of those interested in knowing the past. The women’s groups as well as the Sons of the Revolution (1876), the Children of the Revolution (1895), the General Society of the Mayflower Descendants (1897), and others all carried a “strong connotation of Anglo-Saxon ancestry” alongside the smaller but “equally old and esteemed” Dutch and Huguenots who “proclaimed in similar fashion their pride of nationality.” They did so because they felt threatened by new immigrant groups from southern Europe.  

The new immigrants responded in two ways: either by distancing themselves from such impulses, or forming their own ethnic groups, many of which also had an interest in genealogy. John Appel, in Immigrant Historical Societies in the United States, 1890–1950, stresses the cultural roles of hundreds of such groups. The historical society became, by the 1890s, “almost obligatory for groups seeking to establish and present to the larger culture a cohesive identity.” Yet, to demarcate social hierarchy, the term “Anglo-Saxon” itself remained one of the catch phrases of the older genealogical societies and the new ones such as the DAR.

Comments on racial superiority and rhetorical flourishes of jingoistic impulses became even more common. By the early twentieth century, genealogical practice

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141 Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” American Archivist 63 (Spring/Summer, 2000): 135.
often included an abandonment of historical principles that the antiquarians had argued for, and a preoccupation with questions of superiority in family origins. “[P]atriotism as a restricted birthright”—a sort of heritage cult before historians had named it thus—made genealogy “the indentured servant of neo patriotism.”

The members of the early historical and genealogical societies lost their status as the “men of letters,” to the first generation of professional historians. The schism between antiquarians (and by extension, genealogists) and historians had begun. John Franklin Jameson, the first American PhD in history (1882), officially dictated in 1897 that no historical society had the right “to use its research and publications in furthering” genealogy. Genealogists became relegated to the position of second-class experts with public opinion deferring to academics.

Genealogists responded by adding their own rules and practices. Donald Lines Jacobus was particularly important in creating the first professional standards for genealogists. From Jacobus’ work in the 1920s and 1930s would later be born “four standard bearers” of genealogy: the American Society of Genealogists in 1940, “which has functioned as genealogy’s scholastic honor society”; the National Institute for Genealogical Research in 1950; the Samford University Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research in 1962; and the Board for Certification of Genealogists, created

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144 Ibid. See also Mills, “Genealogy in the ‘Information Age.’”
146 Mills, “Genealogy in the ‘Information Age,’” 262.
from 1962 to 1964. But, as noted in Chapter Two, the schism between historians and genealogists remained.

In his 1924 autobiography, Mark Twain captured the whole of this period’s conflicting impulses towards family history. Twain wrote of his mother, Jane Lampton Clemens, who would never “refer in any way to her gilded ancestry when any person not a member of the family was present, for she had good American sense.” She nevertheless believed “with all her heart” that “the family descended from the lords of Lambton Castle in England.” Twain remembers one Lampton cousin (and also recalls the variant spellings the family took for their name), “the colonel,” who always recalled “the head of our line,” flung off with painful casualness that … compelled inquiry…. Then followed the whole disastrous history of how the Lambton heir came to this country a hundred and fifty years or so ago … while at home in England he was given up as dead and his titles and estates turned over to his younger brother…. And the colonel always spoke with studied and courtly defense of the claimant of his day—a second cousin of his—and referred to him with entire seriousness as “the earl.”

The beginning of a project that would change all family history work emerged in the late 1930s: the microfilming work of the Mormon Church. Since Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints one hundred years earlier, his flock had been called to baptize the dead so that families could be reunited in heaven. This meant knowing the names, birthdates, and death dates of ancestors. The 1894 creation of the Genealogical Society of Utah formalized the initial work of missionaries

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to gather records.\textsuperscript{151} The microfilming project extended this work and this openness to thousands and eventually millions of people.

The work of the Mormons, the growth of the academy, and the rise of historical and genealogical societies also ran parallel with the public archives tradition. This tradition in the U.S. brought the establishment of the first state archives (1901 in Alabama and 1902 in Mississippi). These beginnings were embedded with the interest in family history records by genealogists.\textsuperscript{152} One example of this connection can be found in the work of prominent archival leader Margaret Cross Norton of the Illinois State Archives. As early as the 1920s, she responded to researchers in ways that emphasized how records were used in family history. She edited the Illinois census returns for 1810, 1818, and 1820 for publication by the Illinois Historical Library, thus also contributing directly to the transmission of these records to scores of family historians.\textsuperscript{153} World War II and the affluence of the postwar years provided a climate in which these new state archives became accepted and expected paths for the work of genealogists in public records.

\textbf{A Period of Change: The Late Twentieth Century to the Present}

The Civil Rights Era (1956–1968), the Civil War Centennial (1961–1965), and a World Conference on Records held in Salt Lake City in 1969 all joined to set the stage for an increased interest in learning about families. The American Bicentennial (1976) and especially the publication and televised series of the novel \textit{Roots} (1976) by Alex Haley brought forth an even greater tidal wave that changed forever the way almost all

\textsuperscript{151} Akenson, \textit{Some Family}, 64–65.
\textsuperscript{152} See for example, Berner, \textit{Archival Theory and Practice in the United States}, 1–2, 7; Bonnie G. Smith, \textit{The Gender of History}, 168.
Americans regarded family history. These two events, signaling the new genealogy mentioned earlier, were distinctively set within the opposing camps seen first in the late colonial days: a celebration of Revolutionary heroes, a local form of knowing the past, and, finally, the unstated but ever-present uneasiness about families joined together or split apart by race in a democracy. The Bicentennial held the imprimatur of the national, state, and local governments in commemorations that symbolized the 1776 fight for freedom. But *Roots* made central, made vigorously alive, the populist tradition, and addressed the problem of slavery within the wide field of national and international history.\(^{154}\)

*Roots* took by surprise those people who controlled cultural capital. Although *Reader’s Digest* had long invested in Haley’s writing,\(^{155}\) even they did not foresee the popularity that the genealogical novel would bring. Television officials, even knowing of the book’s popularity, scheduled the miniseries to take place over one week because they thought it would not be popular. Little did they know it would remain popular up to the present.\(^{156}\) Explanations for an interest in genealogy still uniformly mention *Roots*,\(^ {157}\) and genealogically inclined memoirs usually begin by citing *Roots* as inspiration.\(^ {158}\)

Historians treat *Roots* within the purview of the heritage movement. David Lowenthal, for example, particularly links genealogy to a populist trend.\(^ {159}\) Other

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scholars see in Roots just another version of the preoccupation with “self-made men” who yet desire a rapport with the past and some group affiliation. Still other scholarly responses stress the implausibility of actually tracing one’s ancestors as author Haley had done or the success of a narrative that met the psychological needs of U.S. citizens. Nevertheless, even some scholars became interested in a broader definition of local and family history, and the people who learned the national past via their families. Had such family history always been available but just disregarded by historians? Ira Berlin and Leslie Rowland replied that

many slaves carried in their minds detailed genealogies that reached back generations, sometimes to an African root. That familial root, which nurtured people of African descent through the years of bondage, also shaped their vision of a future in freedom.

A growing interest in social history coupled with Roots emboldened scholars like Willard B. Gatewood to address class status within African-American communities, and in so doing to refer back to where and how family history had been kept. Gatewood’s footnotes in a 1988 article refer to a number of obituaries and earlier family histories.

The popularity of Roots continues to influence the yearning for, and the practice of, family history. The televised version was rebroadcasted, for example in 2007, to much acclaim. Also since 2007, public television regularly airs a show on the genealogy of

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famous African Americans, such as star and activist Oprah Winfrey. In this feature, academic historian Henry Lewis Gates discusses traditional genealogical methods and involves genealogists, repositories, private records, and DNA testing to trace a person’s family back generation by generation to Africa. At the end of each session, the person is given a family album, a public presentation, then, of a heritage album. Such an album also has a history associated with various religious communities. Scrapbook making in its current incarnation—and heritage albums in particular—are often dated to the work of a Mormon couple, the Christensens, who gained attention at the World Conference on Genealogy in Salt Lake City in 1980. Marielen Christensen had begun in the 1970s designing pages for her family’s photo collection, experimenting, much as Mark Twain and others from the early twentieth century had, with various bindings and templates for including information on ancestors, images of artifacts, and copies of family records. One key element of her product was the fact that she used binders in which pages could be easily added.

She and her husband found such interest in her solution that they opened a store, which sold archival paper and other products for scrapbooking. They called their store,
Keeping Memories Alive, and they called their heritage albums by a name early twentieth-century scrappers had called many scrapbooks, “memory books.”168

The most well-known of the vendors, Creative Memories, was born some six years after the 1980 World Conference, outside Utah, but with a religious tenor almost as distinctively American as that of the Latter Day Saints. One of Creative Memories’ founders, Rhonda Anderson, had learned scrapbooking from her mother and had always used a particular type of album named for its inventor and his flexible binding patent, the Holes Webway album. Invented by Wilbur Whipple Holes, the “flex-hinge” solved the problems of bulging pages that had plagued scrapbookers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.169 One evening in 1987, Anderson called to order this album only to find that Holes was going out of business. She spoke to Cheryl Lightle who had been sent to oversee the transfer to another company. Together the two formed a division within the newly reorganized Antioch Company.170

The Antioch Company had taken its name from Antioch College, an Ohio Quaker institution known for its emphasis on social justice. Here in the 1920s, students Ernest Morgan and Walter Kahoe worked at the campus print shop. Like the word “scrap” itself and its derivation from the bits of left over chromolithography (scraps) on the floor of the printing room,171 these two students were “distressed by the volume of paper cut-offs


generated by the printing process.” They recycled this paper into decorative bookplates, and set up business.\footnote{172}{Company History, “The Beginning,” The Antioch Company, \url{http://www.antiochcompany.com/beginning.html} (accessed July 10, 2008).}

The company was successful financially and, more relevant to this discussion, continued the philosophy emphasized by the Quaker beliefs of Antioch College. “Honesty, mutual respect, tolerance, recognition of the dignity of people and their ideas, and corporate and individual responsibility” were promoted. So too was the idea that to work “just for the money” was to sell “yourself to slavery.”\footnote{173}{Ibid.}

Pride and practicality in a scrapbook to hold and safeguard memory have remained prominently positioned across the spectrum of scrapbook vendors today. Joined are the older Quaker (and liberal) traditions of respect for a diversity of people, the Mormon (and conservative) traditions of documenting family ancestry, and the emphasis of Creative Memories and others on a community of women, and indeed a community of memory, which can enhance family life through products and activities. Varying political spectrums are overlooked in “giving back” to the larger community\footnote{174}{News Releases, “Partnership with Make-A-Wish Foundation Inspires Downtown Convention,” Creative Memories, \url{http://www.creativememories.com/MainMenu/Our-Company/News-releases/News-release-detail?folder=SEPTEMBER2008} (accessed February 14, 2009); “Company Profile,” The Antioch Company, \url{http://www.antiochcompany.com/coprofile.htm} (accessed July 10, 2008).} in much the same way that Americans generally try “to depoliticize the past in order to minimize memories (and causes) of conflict.”\footnote{175}{Kammen, \textit{Mystic Chords of Memory}, 701.} But the Mormon scrapbookers also subscribe to some of the same ways of speaking about patriotism and a debt to ancestors as heard from family historians and from so many others in American society. The Christensens speak of
being involved in a business that helps bind families and friends together…. We love our country. We appreciate the efforts by those past and present who have sacrificed to preserve our freedom and quality of life. May God bless America.\textsuperscript{176}

Other Utah-based scrapbook vendors consistently support mainstream charities and efforts to support the military in various ways.\textsuperscript{177}

Creative Memories’ partnership with the popular right-wing radio psychologist James Dobson has meant other connections to religion. In 1991 and again in 2007, Dobson gave Anderson and Lightle the limelight on his \textit{Focus on the Family} radio show, which reaches millions of people across the U.S. Both times he praised Creative Memories’ work in raising the self-esteem of children and women involved in the hobby, and spoke of their connections to God.\textsuperscript{178}

For all the vendors, the overall message is “inspire, enrich, connect”\textsuperscript{179}—imperatives vague enough to touch many people. The lawyer, with whom Anderson initially consulted, articulated to her the passion that the business could inspire, without overtly mentioning religion. On their website in 2008, his words are given prominence, its own place of a memory about memory. He told Anderson that every day he dealt with people who had given up on each other, their marriages, their children, their jobs and their lives in general. He was sure that if they’d preserved positive, cherished memories in the same loving way she had, they wouldn’t be in his office.\textsuperscript{180}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[178]{“Making Memories That Last,” sound recording; “Making Memories That Last, Focus on the Family: Years Later.” DVD.}
\end{footnotes}
Anderson and Lightle began by promoting the idea that “everybody has a story to tell” and that people can make “a difference, page by page, out of your heart and onto the page.” For them, the company maintains a stance very like that of the Antioch philosophy: They want to empower their consultants to see their work as fulfilling. Creative Memories is “more than just a photo album company. We are about tradition, and we have been since the beginning. We are about legacies. Without this higher purpose, we would be just another album company.”\textsuperscript{181}

Creative Memories’ magazine \textit{Lasting Moments} offers a chance for other people also to praise album making. One contributor, Caralee Adams, discussed heritage albums by interviewing a genealogist who explained how she works with her daughter: “Every night since she was 4 or 5, we pick an ancestor and recount a memory.” Adams also interviewed Michael Pratt, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada, who spoke of materials that provide young people with ways of “developing their own life stories,” and with Emory University psychologist Robyn Fivush, who is quoted as finding that family history stories give a child “a real sense of security across time … a place in the world.”\textsuperscript{182}

That genealogy has deep appeal to many other people was not lost on the commercial sector of the 1990s and early 2000s. The growth of the Internet and the constantly expanding additions of databases, digital records, various templates to make electronic and paper memory products have made family history work ever more possible. The titles of selected articles alone tell the story: “Roots Network: Millions of

\textsuperscript{181} Lightle and Anderson, \textit{The Creative Memories}, 4.
Americans seek their ancestors in record books, cemeteries and cyberspace”; and “Money grows on family trees, Genealogy carves out profitable niche on the Internet.”

**Between Public and Private Records**

On the whole then, what Raphael Samuel observed for the United Kingdom is true for the United States: There is now a “remarkable ‘do-it-yourself’ archive-based scholarship.” Yet, in considering this chronology of genealogical practice in the United States, it is useful to return again to Jefferson, the record keeper. Besides his books about European genealogy, his self-designed symbols, his work against primogeniture, Jefferson also burned the letters of his own mother, deciding to de-emphasize her part of his family or himself in that family.

All the while, he kept commonplace books and scrapbooks. Among his possessions now housed in the University of Virginia Library are several scrapbooks that show his interest in leaving a legacy describing the simplicity of his private life. Clippings of poetry, farming information, songs, political satire—these are items he thought fitting to save for his family. Jefferson then transmitted a legacy of records and documents in a trajectory that began with him. He is typically American in his duality of interest in and aversion to hierarchy, and more typically human in his desire to shape his

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185 Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage*, 70.
186 Jefferson-Randolph Family Scrapbooks, 1800-1808, Accession #5948, 5948-a, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA. There are also other scrapbooks in the Jefferson collection, and in later years, the form was adopted for a printed volume called *Monticello Scrapbook: Little Stories of the Children and Grand-children of Thomas Jefferson* by Betty Elise Davis (New York: Attlee Press, 1951).
identity around selected records and to forget (even to destroy) others, to choose those receptacles where he himself could shape the transmission of memory.

Like Jefferson, other Americans embody these paradoxes of family history: notably, Mr. Sewall and the women whose names were included in the new tradition of American family registers with whom we began this chapter. The next chapters consider what can be known about still others who similarly shape the memories of families.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Human thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications. At base, thinking is a public activity—its natural habitat is the houseyard, the marketplace, and the town square.¹

In the year 1870, prominent New York society members General and Mrs. Egbert Ludovickus Vielé sued each other for divorce on nearly identical grounds: adultery, insanity, and cruelty. General Vielé was accused of having an affair with Miss Julia Dana, and Mrs. Vielé with General W. W. Averill. In 1869 General Vielé had absconded with the children and his mistress. Throughout the ordeal of trying to recover her children and divorcing her unfaithful husband, Mrs. Vielé kept scrapbooks ... letters, newspaper clippings, and telegrams from attorneys and detectives.²

This chapter considers work among family historians and album makers, and especially their guidance in learning the worlds of family history practices. From time spent with them, and time in reflection about them, the two main research questions asked were “What circumstances lead to an interest in family records?” and, “What does work with these records involve?”

Ethnographic Work

To answer these questions, an ethnographic study employing textual analysis, participant observation, and interviewing was conducted. For anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whose quote above urges going into “the houseyard, the marketplace, and the town square,” ethnography is defined by “the kind of intellectual effort it is, an elaborate venture in … ‘thick description.’” Such work involves “sorting out structures of signification” and grappling with

a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which [the researcher] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.3

Pertinent here is his attentiveness to layers, his weighing of the

multiple forms through which the social is enacted and accounted for … rendered through actions, narratives, texts, visual representations, and material artifacts … [constituting] multiple semantic domains, multiple arenas of action, and multiple sources of significance.4

The recording of the varied evidence, the scrapbook maker Mrs. Vielé also knew. She, in a sense, wrote field notes of her own life.

This study follows these and other examples, and was conceived to allow attentiveness to actor-networks created in the diversity of people, machines, and hierarchies5 moving records across time and space. In general, ethnography allows for concentration on particular cultures via transcripts, analysis, and other reports. As noted in a number of introductory texts in anthropology and sociology, as well as two reports

3 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 6, 9–10.
from archivistics, such multi-method approaches have long been used to give clarity to specific social settings, especially those of a tacit nature. Since many practices concerned with documenting families are isolated almost completely from academic research, and relatively isolated from everyday life outside the home, the library, or archives, ethnography offered the chance to study context and process in “understanding behaviour.” Although most archival science dissertations have relied upon historical research methods rather than ethnography, archivists also have shown that processes are often best studied by observation and direct inquiry of subjects. Helen Samuels makes this point in her functional analysis of college and university documentation, and Elizabeth Yakel also discusses this focus in her dissertation work on recordkeeping in a medical setting.

Ethnographic methods were also chosen since they bring a strong commitment to reflexivity and reflection, the return to the field and documents, the consideration of “what to keep.” Interviewing, textual analysis, and participant observation—a triangulation of methods—allowed a focus on the necessity of gathering materials that gave the most complete picture of processes involved in archivalization, and the work involved with records by those interested in family history. At the same time, Geertz’s “appraisal,” his term for reflection and reflexivity, also reminded me of similarities and

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9 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 16.
differences in archival work and family history work. Thus the triangulation afforded a
mindfulness of how these two practices of recordkeeping (family history and archivistics)
inform one another.

**Early Stages of Work and Ongoing Considerations**

Early readings and conversations with album makers and genealogical researchers
presented many opportunities for being attuned to answers, organizing these insights into
patterns, adjusting questions and later, returning to interviewees as the project progressed.
Initial work revealed, for example, different strata within particular groups keeping
records of the family, but also a number of connections. For both album makers and
genealogical researchers, there was usually an elderly holder of the family records—
sometimes an album maker—one relative who had records from three to five generations
back. There was also usually a much younger person within a smaller family unit who
took it upon herself (and usually this was a woman’s role) to begin keeping records on
births, diseases, immunizations, schooling, marriages, and deaths. She, too, often made
albums but also either spoke with family historians or dreamed of finding the time to
document more of her family through records in archives. There was usually one
photographer and one “photograph keeper” recognized in a family. Finally, there were
the different levels of expertise among genealogical researchers trained in workshops and
home-study courses who knew the rules of citation and the necessity of state records, yet
who also spoke of an initial reliance upon private records holders. All these people held
distinct but overlapping roles and at the same time held opinions of one another, which
produced a hierarchy of “knowers,”\(^\text{10}\) the levels of expertise mentioned in Chapter Two.

In addition, their networks and hierarchies included nonhuman agents of pen, pencil,

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\(^{10}\) Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 590.
photography, scanning, flash drives, and other plentiful storage containers, as well as electronic media of various sorts. Only by considering all these mediating actors from the viewpoint of the informants’ words could the processes of knowledge about family records be understood.

The goal of understanding and then describing recordkeeping work by family historians and album makers also involved exploring their positions in terms of beliefs and attitudes. These, their “attitudinal constructs,” are ways of approaching the world and making decisions about what they do: processes that have been shown by numerous early feminist scholars to differ according to gender.\(^\text{11}\) Political scientist Lyn Kathlene, for example, studied policymaking “under the broad themes of individualism and interdependence that have been found to be or theorized to be gender related….“ Her “instrumentalism” and “contextualism” were taken as models for constructs that describe the family historians and album makers, such as a division of individuals who were “rules-based” and those who were “connections-based.” Similar to the work of Carol Gilligan on men and women and their varying reasons for decision making on moral issues, the album makers (who were all but one, women) were more “connections-based” in their efforts than were family historians (a female-dominated group that was insistent on codified standards).\(^\text{12}\) But what other factors governed the influences on and opinions of their work? Consideration of attitudinal constructs allowed another way of focusing attention on the possible remnants of past traditions in which women were assigned the


\(^{12}\) Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 99.
role of memorializing the dead or other traditions in which women were considered more “naturally” inclined to recordkeeping about families, as noted in earlier chapters.

Other aspects of gender were also considered as being best studied via attentiveness to how people actually worked, to asking if there were any details in current work that suggested a tradition of “gendered-knowing.” While all ethnographic work requires the active involvement of the researcher in the production of social knowledge through direct participation in and experience of the social realities she is seeking to understand. Feminist field researchers add... the necessity of continuously and reflexively attending to the significance of gender as a basic feature of all social life... understanding the social realities of women as actors whom previous sociological research has rendered invisible.

While much has occurred in the years since Judith Dilorio wrote this statement in 1982, ethnography still remains an approach requiring engagement on a number of levels, something desired here for studying the lives of family historians and album makers, as people who are often left out of academic discourse. Dorothy Smith, writing of her forty-year career in sociology, located her work in feminism and “people’s standpoint” in order to study those excluded from positions of agency. She calls “institutional ethnography” a way of “looking out beyond the everyday to discover how it came to happen as it does.” This echoes archival educator Eric Ketelaar’s call for looking beyond and questioning the boundaries of records.

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17 Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*, 3.
Yet the use of the words “beyond the boundaries” must be supplemented by the recognition that what was being learned consisted of how so many family historians and album makers crossed back and forth between recordkeeping and record creating, and how the records continuum played out in their gathering, using, transmitting, and pluralizing records. Since the bridging of public and private in these processes was duplicated in bringing their words to pages in my writing, it was important then in other ways to be conscious of my actions and words as social acts. Though different from my informants, I worked among them and here speak of that work in the first person. I do so for a number of reasons but most of all because speaking from one’s own perspective is what I asked of family historians and album makers.

Ethnography almost always involves this approach of being willing to stand “poised between familiarity and strangeness … between stranger and friend.” At the same time, researchers must not “over-identify” with the cultures they study. I believe I achieved this sort of balance, even though as an archivist, researcher, and resident of the Gulf South, I share with these people the “the same overall cultural framework” of an interest in records, of the processes of research, and of a place of residence. These were circumstances I told the groups and informants about in beginning the study. I also acknowledged differences: I work with different kinds of records than they do. I write field notes on family historians and album makers. I live here, but I also study this place.

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19 For some background on a similar choice, see Karen F. Gracy, “Documenting Communities of Practice: Making the Case for Archival Ethnography,” Archival Science 4, nos. 3-4 (2004): 339 n11.
22 Ibid.
In being clear about these methodological concerns, I was received by family historians and album makers with some openness, dependent more on the particular individual and his or her own personal boundaries than on the study itself. That said, genealogists and album makers are a welcoming group, accepting of many different types of people, and accepting of me, in this case, in spite of my difference from them.

Finding People to Study

Family historians were located through their associations with selected libraries, archives, and the Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans (GRS, founded 1960), the Jefferson Genealogical Society (Jefferson Parish, being a suburb of New Orleans, the JGS, founded 1984), and the Mobile (Alabama) Genealogical Society (MGS, founded 1960). These are membership-based groups, open to anyone interested in family history, although the New Orleans society restricts themselves to “natural born persons,” meaning someone born in the United States or to U.S. citizens living in other countries. All three have members who range in years of practice from one to more than forty years. Also interviewed were six genealogical researchers who were not members of these societies but who were active in lineage groups, library workshops for family history, and other genealogical groups. An attempt was made to include a spectrum of practitioners at various levels, including one board-certified genealogist, and representatives of different ethnic and racial groups.

Album makers were located either from referrals among family historians or from meetings with scrapbook consultants. Most of these consultants and their clients worked with the well-known Creative Memories products. However, through visiting scrapbook
stores and attending their workshops, as well as through word of mouth, six album makers who worked with products sold by other companies were also interviewed.

Phases of the Study

In addition to reading about family history, records, memory and archives, this study involved five phases of ethnographic work, data analysis, and writing. Time was allowed also for periods of overlap to adjust the theoretical concepts and the steps within each phase—the process of appraisal discussed above. This flexible research approach “embraces the continuous learning process, devalues the dichotomous subject/object distinction, and allows for a more open research approach.”

One example of this approach was Anne-Marie Fortier’s study of Italian women as central to the memories of a migrant community in England.24 Another was Beverly Skeggs’s study of the formation of class and gender, which likewise proceeded with simultaneous interviewing, observation, and reading, with each phase of research enlightening the others until the conclusions.25

Phase One

In this phase, groups, individuals, and settings were identified. This period also involved gathering and studying textual information about the groups (their own publications and those of others), participating in meetings, and observing activities and actors. A questionnaire was designed and the first ten interviews were conducted.

Textual analysis

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Textual analysis involved studying printed and online matter from the groups (their handouts, histories, by-laws, descriptions, and websites). Attention was paid to the style of writing, as well as content, modes of expression, and particular vocabularies. Taking a cue from cultural studies methodology,26 similar publications from other groups were also studied. These documents were important for two reasons. First, understanding them brought opportunities for comparisons. Second, understanding them added to the analysis of texts available to album makers and family historians.

*Participant Observation*

During 2006, 2007, and 2008, I was allowed to participate and observe the work of family history. As its name explicitly states, participant observation requires entry into a setting where people work, familiarization with people and places, development of relations with people, observation of many different events and functions, and involvement in daily routines.27 All of these were possible for me except a consistent involvement in daily routines. However, the lack of daily time with informants mirrored also their work: only one of the respondents themselves worked every day, or even five days a week on their projects.

I devoted some 200 hours to interviewing, textual analysis, and participation in various activities with family historians and album makers. These hours were spent in attending business meetings and workshops, researching alongside them in local libraries and archives (including one library maintained by the Mobile Genealogical Society where more than anywhere else conversation was constant and genealogy was the only topic of conversation in a dedicated space), learning from lineage societies’ one-on-one

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sessions, and taking a workshop on genealogical research. For work with album makers, this meant attending open houses, “cropping” sessions where one makes albums seated beside others who are doing so, and workshops on technology offered by different companies for scrapbook makers. These occurred in private homes where the consultants are based, or in large halls in churches, schools, or camps, rented especially for those times when long tables are needed, and where participants can remain for six hours straight, or even longer, as in the all-weekend or vacation sessions.

In early meetings, information was distributed about the study. In this way, the names of future interviewees were gathered as I discussed my role and my work as a researcher. This honesty was important personally, but also was a part of my conformity to the rules of the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the Office of Research of Tulane University. Introductory materials were also developed that provided consent forms that met IRB standards.\(^{28}\) The questionnaires were also approved by IRB.

Field notes were written after each meeting, providing information on the settings, descriptions of those persons in attendance, stories and queries presented. Some of these field notes were entered into word processing files so that they might be easily used in the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, discussed more below. The field notes served more immediately in facilitating weekly or daily analysis of learning, and planning the next steps.

**Phase Two**

Based on textual analysis and participant observation experiences, Phase Two included more participant observation and a redesign of the questionnaire. The latter was

\(^{28}\) The consent form allowed for the taping, transcription, and use of the words of the interviewees in published and unpublished reports, and for the deposit of the interviews in the Newcomb Archives.
necessary because the first draft of the questionnaire was too long. The pretest informants, who had been asked for three stories of looking for ancestors, proved very voluble about stories of lost ancestors or opinions on such issues as family cohesiveness. The revised questionnaire asked only about one project.

Added in this period were questions about education and gender, topics that earlier had been expected to come forward without having to be asked. Similarly, the most surprising finding about questions-to-be-asked concerned how much informants wished to follow a specific guideline. The questionnaire first had been based upon the writing of scholars in cultural studies, grounded theory, and feminist studies. These scholars believe that ethnographers gain the best information by seeing interviewing as an art of conversation. The interview instrument, the guide, should be then just that: only a list to which one refers.29

My previous ethnographic work (done in the 1980s and 1990s) had born out the call for flexibility and this free-form interviewing.30 From this earlier study, I learned more particularly about issues of race and gender in interviews where I overlooked the questionnaire and encouraged interviewees to talk about their own concerns. In the interviews in this current study, however, neither family historians nor album makers seemed comfortable with this free-form approach. Genealogical researchers especially seemed to like questions being followed from a sheet of paper, and were curious about “what was written down” to ask. Perhaps because they have long felt academic

discrimination and because they come from a rules-based form of inquiry, they wanted to see the questions, and they wanted to give answers to specific questions. Album makers were less intent upon seeing the questionnaire, but they too seemed to wait for the next question, to follow more than to lead in our “conversations.” Creating a well-designed questionnaire, not just one to serve as an ice-breaker, then, became one of the most important activities in the second phase of research.

Major areas covered in the questionnaire concern demographic information, employment and educational background; general questions about beginning and continuing motivations and knowledge of records; processes and practices; purposes and vocabularies. A copy of the questionnaire appears in the appendix.

**Phase Three**

In the third phase, the revised questionnaire enabled a return to the original ten interviewees and completion of a total of fifty-two interviews (twenty-six family historians and twenty-six album makers). This phase also included again attending meetings and workshops, completing a family heritage album and beginning research in my own family history, as well as other work alongside informants in various other endeavors.

As noted above, respondents were selected based upon the range of backgrounds they seemed to represent. Those interviewed included one professional genealogist alongside a handful of expert researchers without credentials, beginning researchers, consultants with experience making albums for others, consultants who had themselves

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31 A number of the interviewees discussed this discrimination. See also Robert M. Taylor and Crandall, “Historians and Genealogists,” 15–16; Mills, “Genealogy in the ‘Information Age,’” 260–271.
32 Gracy, “The Imperative to Preserve,” 113.
33 A copy of the questionnaire appears in the appendix.
made over 50 scrapbooks, or others who had made just one or a few albums. These individuals were selected in order to have as many different people from different stages of life, different races, educational backgrounds, employment categories, and different social and economic classes. On the whole, however, they mirrored national demographic backgrounds of their respective groups.

_Family Historians_

Among the family historians, twenty-four lived in areas along the Gulf Coast, south Louisiana, the cities of New Orleans and Mobile, or were visiting or working (hurricane relief work) in this area during 2006–2008. The other two came from the Washington, D.C. area, though one of these was also originally from the Gulf Coast area. Of the twenty-six family historians interviewed, eleven were male and fifteen were female.

In ages, they ranged from 16 to 83 years, with the breakdown as follows:

![Family Historians by Age and Gender](image)
All but three were white Caucasians of European descent. Three were African American, and these three were male.

Of the twenty-six, six worked or had worked in a professional field; three were or had been blue collar workers; one worked as a housewife; six worked in traditionally female administrative and clerical positions; and ten worked in the education sector. In this latter sector, there was one professional genealogist.

Although interviewees were not asked about income, all but one family historian spoke of jobs that placed them within the middle class. However, three spoke of childhoods with some deprivation (the necessity of placing children up for adoption, the necessity of children going to work at age fourteen, and the necessity of joining the military in order to get medical coverage).

The interviewees showed a wide variety of educational levels:
In age and educational level, these demographics mirror the demographic make-up of family historians nationwide. A wide variety of people are interested in genealogy. In the sample of interviewees and in the membership records studied, people over 65 made up approximately one-tenth of the members of the groups. Similarly, though there is an assumption that retired people form a large majority of family historians, the National Genealogical Society (NGS) reported the numbers of “senior members” at 1,655, or some 23 percent, out of 7,815 individual members in April, 2008.34

In terms of gender, women make up a slightly higher percentage (seventy-seven percent, sixty-two percent, seventy-one percent, respectively) of current members from the Mobile Genealogical Society, the Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans, and the Jefferson Genealogical Society.

*Album Makers*

Among the album makers, twenty-four of the interviewees lived in areas along the Gulf Coast, in the city of New Orleans, or were visiting and working (hurricane relief work) in this area during 2006–2008. Two were from the Washington, D.C. area. Of the twenty-six album makers interviewed only one was a man, and he was of European descent. Two album makers were African American, one was Hispanic—the rest were of other European ancestry. One fell into the age bracket of 15 to 30 years old. Fourteen fell between the ages of 31 and 45; seven, ages 46 to 65; two, ages 66 to 75; and two, ages 75 to 90. Overall, five were retired; eleven were employed outside the home. Seven worked at home (two with their own businesses, and five as Creative Memories consultants).

Two album makers represented other scrapbooking companies—one represented her own

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34 Jan Alpert, President of the National Genealogical Society (NGS), email to author, April 16, 2008. Alpert also stated that no statistics existed that counted male versus female members.
company, and another represented more than one company and also worked as a professional. Three were fulltime stay-at-home mothers who did not have an outside job.

In terms of education, twelve stopped schooling after high school; two held vocational degrees; twelve held degrees from colleges or universities, with four of these holding graduate degrees (two in business, one in educational administration, and one in veterinary science).
Although information about income was not gathered, all the interviewees lived in (or spoke of living in) neighborhoods that could be described as middle class. Fifteen were interviewed in their homes and these homes were in affluent suburbs— with two- or three-car garages, and wide expanses of lawns. Two others lived in rural areas and had homes one would also describe as middle class. Only two interviewees lived in urban settings, both in New Orleans, and one of these (the one man noted above) was from a family known for its wealth and philanthropy. Both he and the Hispanic woman were members of the upper middle class. Even the architecture of their homes held stories these album makers recounted with pride.

Twenty-one album makers spoke of strong roots to the neighborhoods where they lived. At times, this allegiance came from their own families of origin; for others, this came through their spouse’s family. Eleven lived in the same metropolitan area of their childhood and their parents’ childhoods; ten lived in the same region of their childhood,
the South. Three have moved from one region to another, mostly from the Midwest or the Eastern Seaboard. And two have lived within other countries. All felt a particular allegiance to the Gulf Coast, a sensibility that was not unusual among those who had been through the 2004 and 2005 storm seasons. It was striking that they discussed this allegiance more often than did family historians.

Analysis

As in Phases One and Two, textual analysis, continuing participant observation, and interviewing in Phase Three provided the chance to gather information, analyze and test findings. Phase Three also presented opportunities for exploring the two main research questions, how people come to this interest in records and what their work with records involves. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder, as were many conversations at other gatherings. Interviews lasted from one to three hours. Five interviewees called or wrote emails afterwards to tell of various aspects on which they wanted to elaborate.

Listening to the interviews occurred first within twenty-four hours of completion. Questions to be asked in a return visit or by phone calls and email were then formulated and pursued. As noted earlier, this sort of constant interaction allowed learning from the interviews, and was part of a number of different theoretical approaches to research. Grounded theory, for example, offers the conceptualization of “generations of theories.”35 Similarly, the reflexive orientation of feminist and institutional ethnographies emphasizes the competencies of interviewees and their ability to enlighten the research design.36

The interviews were transcribed promptly. Transcriptions were entered into NVivo, a qualitative data management and analysis software program. This program

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35 Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 47.
allows the analysis of responses and patterns of words used, as well as the production of various statistical reports.

**Phase Four**

As the transcripts and field notes were reread, Phase Four saw the beginning of closer analysis. Defined as the identification of passages that exemplify ideas and concepts, coding has been more elegantly depicted as those “analytical processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory.”

Coding with the help of the software program NVivo allowed the insight into both this process and the vocabularies and processes of family historians and album makers. Open coding was chosen as a method, for as Strauss and Corbin suggest, this process avoids labels that are merely associative and allows the formulation of theoretical names based upon what one is learning.

The success of coding “lies in turning the answers” of the interviewee into “specific pieces of field-note data.” The researcher must create “a distinctive kind of writing—a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to some more general analytical issue.”

With the NVivo reports in hand, six of the interviewees were contacted again for further discussions. These interviewees were chosen because of their articulate and insightful comments, as well as the lengthy descriptions of records travelling over time and space. Two of these series of interviews are discussed in depth in Chapter Seven.

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40 Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 146.
During this time, selected archivists and librarians who work with family historians were also consulted. In these discussions, questions about various patterns were asked in order to have their opinions on the *representativeness* of the findings. Although a number of researchers question the need for such consultations and other measures in qualitative research, they proved useful in this work. First, as Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont urge, some sort of verification of findings provides insight into epistemological issues, certainly a concern of this study involving how informants think of their own knowledge. Second, as Ann Gray observes, these sorts of evaluations allow insight into ontological issues, here aiding in formulations of ideas about groups, memories, and hierarchies.

In addition, in this Phase Four, Karen Gracy’s dissertation in archivistics was a reference point. Gracy took as her measure for bias the words of Robert Weiss, listing four areas to monitor in qualitative research: sampling, interviewing, interpretation and reporting, and intellectual honesty.

In considering sampling, the hypersensitivity of those of us from the Gulf Coast area was recognized, and is discussed more below. By and large, though, care was given not to choose interviewees who seemed so upset by the flooding that they could not offer thoughts on broader topics. In other areas of the sample, an attempt was made, as noted, to include many different types of family historians and album makers, with different levels of expertise and skills.

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42 Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, *Key Themes in Qualitative Research*, 148.

In terms of interviewing, almost all questions were open-ended. Each respondent was asked to answer as honestly as he or she could without regard for what they might think was desired. Only once did an interview take place in a crowded room, where possibly others could overhear, and this time, at the behest of the informant. Each interview began with a statement to the informants about how their own experiences and thoughts best informed the study.

In terms of interpretation and reporting, the project was conceived such that the analysis of texts, transcripts, and field notes allowed concentration not only on what was stated but also on the patterns of thoughts and the choice of words. The use of software helped in this matter, as did a comparison of different ways of using family records, of different products and goals, and of the organization and display of work.

Finally, an ongoing focus on intellectual honesty meant the necessity of weekly writing, evaluating this writing, and assessing interpretations of descriptions and explanations. The latter involved asking others to read this work.

**Phase Five**

In the fifth phase, all transcripts, field notes, categories, and patterns were studied again and findings were written. The chapters that follow show this analysis. One decision during writing was the choice to use pseudonyms, rather than actual names or some sort of numbering system for interviewees (Family Historian I, Album Maker 2, etc.). The use of numbers seemed rather stilted especially given that names are so important to family history. Pseudonyms then were chosen to conform to the guidelines of the IRB at Tulane University. However, because of the public nature of the accounts told in Chapter Seven, actual names are used there.
In addition, because some information was obtained at crops and at meetings, there were in fact more informants than the 52 interviewees. While the majority of the words of family historians and album makers cited in this study come from the interviews, from time to time, these others informants (outside the 52 interviews) are quoted and are not identified by any name.

**Setting and Methodological Considerations**

As previously mentioned, the choice of the Gulf Coast setting brought a heightened sensitivity to records, their importance, and their vulnerabilities. Recall from Chapter One that in the first example of a family historian, Joseph is dependent on those records scanned or otherwise represented in software programs since “his originals” perished in the flooding of 2005. Recall too that he now works more with Anna, the first album maker presented and his cousin, since he had given her copies. Like these two, all the other interviewees mentioned the flooding and hurricanes as central to their willingness to talk to me, and as central to their thoughts on so much about what they do, and about what the loss of records means on so many different personal and societal levels.

This setting was chosen since I too live in this area. The work itself enabled an exploration of a subject important to me and to the archival profession, that is, a description of how people maintaining personal archives are influenced by disasters, and how they consider records amidst disasters and disaster recovery.

Yet this setting also presented some methodological problems that can only be addressed through various statements to readers. First, there will always be questions about my own sensitivity and being careful not to push in certain areas that held so much
emotion for all of us in this area. Second, there is the recognition that the people on the
Gulf Coast have certainly given more thought to the fragility of records than have people
in other places.

For these reasons, four interviews were conducted in the Washington, D.C. area. Yet even these interviewees were very conscious of the storm and the possible dangers to records. Hurricane Katrina’s coverage by the press was extensive. To recount even a small part of what interviewees knew first- or secondhand of the storm’s damage is not the intent of this study but there is some hope that someone else later will use the interviews for that purpose.

Eight of the twenty-six family historians (or half of the total of fifteen who lived in the New Orleans metropolitan area) had extensive hurricane damage with three people having more than twenty feet of water in their homes for over three weeks. Three had more than six feet of water, though it did not stay in the houses for more than a day. Of the eight who had flooding, all had some computer backups and/or materials located higher than the twenty feet, and thus saved many records. But two family historians lost all their paper copies.

Among album makers, six had so much damage to their homes that they were away for more than six months. Three more had damage to their places of work. Eight more were away for five months during the fall of 2005. All of them were able to save their albums and their research materials, however.

For these people and other people knowledgeable about the fragility of records, the storms brought many reasons for concern. Twenty-three repositories had damages
totaling more than one million dollars in costs for restoration. Four interviewees discussed these institutional losses. Most damages occurred because remediation work could not begin for weeks after the storm. In neighboring Mississippi, four courthouses and records in 22 depositories suffered extensive damage, and one interviewee in Mobile discussed this. Each interviewee, however, in New Orleans and Mobile, discussed precautions and other means of safeguarding records at home, that is, private records. What one interviewee stated was probably true for all of us during 2006 and 2007: The damages from the 2005 storms were “on my mind every day.”

Family historians and album makers both practically and philosophically continued their work with records almost immediately after the storm. As Emily (b. 1925) noted, “Would we not do it just because it could be lost? I think we do it because it can be lost, because we know so much is lost of life. Life is short.” And as another said, “In doing this you are saying, something lasts. That’s what all family history says too. What drives it is that we want something to last.”

**Cognizance of Ethnographic Interfaces**

The compulsion to find memory, sociologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka might answer, is what these interviewees are describing. For Irwin-Zarecka, inscribing is a process that is attuned not only “to the vicissitudes of historical knowledge or narrative” but also to “the construction of our emotional and moral engagement with the past.” Family historians and album makers are part of a dynamic process shaping this emotional and moral engagement. The following chapters explore and present their interfaces, my

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45 Julia Marks Young, Director of State Archives, Mississippi, conversation with the author, July 16, 2006.
lessons gained by joining them, extending, as Geertz recommended “the consultable record,” something Mrs. Viélé also understood in her scrapbook making.

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47 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 30.
CHAPTER FIVE

FAMILY HISTORIANS

There was this little ring that my grandmother had. She kept it in the kitchen window in a bowl. And I said to her, “Why is it there?” And she said, “It is to remind me of my mother. She took off her ring to wash dishes. So I remember her. And I remember her mother before her and all the ones before her.” My grandmother said that to me and so I wanted to find out, did they always have wedding rings? I wanted to know that and family history was easier than taking a real class, you know, I couldn’t go back to school.

Shelley, b. 1949

You ask first, who has that information? Also you have to take into consideration too how smart these people were. Did they keep these records? Or did they have a certain individual who kept these records in a town hall or the church? Did the church survive the war and things like that. These are the things you have to look at and consider and say, if I can find the records.

Armand, b. 1959

This chapter reports on circumstances that surround beginning interests in family history and processes of work of family historians. First given is a brief overview of those people interviewed on the project, including descriptions of the settings in which they work. Second, attention is turned to the purposes they find in their work, their means of finding and keeping records, and their thoughts on gender and migration. Finally, the comments of family historians are considered in terms of transmission and pluralization.
Settings: People in the Houses of Memory

The metaphor of memory as “a place”—diversely imagined as a dovecote, rooms in a house, or a palace—extends from antiquity to the present. The archives as the “authoritative storing and inscription of memory” also has been evoked in recent times, within and outside archivistics.

“Placemaking” is a concept more often considered literally by family historians. Specifically, how did their ancestors make a place for themselves in some physical location in the large world? What kind of place did they make? What traces of memory did they leave there? Also, where will family historians keep all the materials they find in their research? How will they appropriate place and space to represent past time?

In terms of their taxonomic placement, and as shown in the previous chapter, of the twenty-six family historians, eleven are male and fifteen are female. They ranged in age from 16 to 83 years, with educational backgrounds almost evenly distributed between high school, university, and graduate work. With regards to how they viewed their family history work, all but the one professional genealogist should be considered as participants in “serious leisure,” which is a “systematic pursuit … sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant [potentially] to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.” In other words, they approach family history with more “earnestness, sincerity, importance, and carefulness” than would someone involved in gardening.


tennis, or other projects. 3 This was true of all the people interviewed, even the beginners. (Others, less serious, probably did not choose to talk to me.) In addition to this attitudinal disposition, more than half (ten men and six women) of the twenty-six interviewees had practiced family history for more than twenty years. Five other women had practiced for 11–20 years. The minority were those who had practiced less than 5 years (one man and one woman) and those who had practiced 5 to 10 years (three women).

Bruce (b. 1940) is one who has practiced more than twenty years. His small house is literally given over to his collections, his living room remade into two offices filled with shelves, desks, and filing cabinets. Even more dedicated space is given to family history by another interviewee, Madeleine (b. 1936). For her, memory work has been “spilling over” her entire house and all her activities for also more than twenty years. The linen closet is filled with archival boxes; a guest room’s dressers and beds hold various albums and artifacts. An office in a converted garage contains more files as well as a computer and printer all devoted to the outputs of various software programs, scanned records, and files of correspondence. On the walls throughout her house are photographs, family trees, and various artifacts.

Twenty-four other people like Bruce and Madeleine told about or presented similar homes and similar pursuits. Among the family historians interviewed in their homes (ten of the twenty-six), two others could be described as having an extended office that took up half of a modest house (more than 1,500 square feet). Three others had more than one large room devoted to family history. Another three had dedicated spaces, described as offices, studies, or libraries devoted to their family history. All had

photographs and other memorabilia of family history spread throughout the house. They are the self-named “keepers … for you never know when some record you thought was stray, was unrelated, suddenly has meaning.”

First Remembered Records: Obituaries

But even earlier, there was a conscious choice of archivalization—that time when decisions are made to seek and keep records. Asked about how they became interested in family history, Bruce and Madeleine spoke of obituaries. Bruce remembers, “They gave a little biography, and I always liked biographies.” Madeleine remembers that obituaries were, still are, a vision of worlds, you know, but then they seemed to me outside what I would discuss with my parents or even my friends. We were allowed to read the newspaper in the morning, and it was a way I guess I thought of the city, my place in it.

Bruce and Madeleine then knew as children a record form with a public presentation that intrigued them personally. Madeleine remembers liking to read “where people were born and who their families were.” She also read “where and when they died.” Obituaries gave the dates bracketing life. In other words, she read in them of “the liminal space between life and before life, between life and death” as family history itself does.  

Obituaries are a staple of family historians’ work. As Chuck (b. 1937) stated, “… [D]eath notices in the newspaper…. All the names, I can read a bunch of names, if I think I can use one of them, sounds familiar, I’ll cut it out, save it.” Family historians also talked of various styles of obituary writing. As one Mobile researcher said, “Now in the 1930s, they started adding more of the kinfolk to the obituaries in the newspapers in the South. Before then they were a description of the bedside, the last moments, that kind of

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thing, and also notice of where the funeral would be.” Another piped in, “Even today, you know in the newspapers in England they don’t tell the cause of death usually, and my cousin says that Chicago is the same, not as much information as we are used to.” For their own newsletters, the members of the three genealogical societies studied want obituaries that are “more specific than the more immediate newspaper obituary would be.”

As Madeleine thought as a child, obituaries tell much about not only the deceased, but also the culture in which they lived, about the audience reading the notice. When a member of the Jefferson Genealogical Society (JGS), Barbara Ann Lottinger Allen, died in 2004, her obituary appeared in the society’s newsletter the following year. Her fellow member, the author of the obituary, shaped his text to tell of her identity within that group: “ALLEN, a genealogist, has passed into the records.”

His style displays a blend of the familiar with the details that genealogists want to know. Allen had died “on Thursday morning, July 29, 2004, after several years of difficulties with a cardiac condition, which to the end did not move her from a cheerful disposition and an abiding love of family and humanity.” She is given the status of child, wife, in-law, mother, and, most importantly to family history, names are given for all family members. They are the branches on the family tree that could be studied by others. Her schooling, her employment, and even some of the employments of her children are given, also aspects of her life that could yield records. The last paragraph gives more information that one day may be important if a DNA sample has not been taken: “After donation of organs, plans were for cremation.” Her membership in a church is recorded.

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and then comes notice of her legacy. “A member of several genealogical societies, she leaves as her memorial and as inspiration for other genealogists a monumental book on the history and genealogy of the FALGOUT family.”

Most critical, however, is the beginning phrase “ALLEN has passed into the records.” Here, the community of records is extended beyond life. The name and the metaphoric passage to records serve, much as Marianne Hirsh notes for the photograph, as a “frame for narrative and imaginary power.” Names and inscription of these names form the key to all family history research, the requirements for most beginnings, hence the pull of the obituary. The place of family history is marked here again, at least in part between the living and the dead, with a fixed date, and a fixed record that moves towards memorialization.

The JGS newsletter emphasizes this duality both in their thorough obituaries of members and in their emphasis on names: All proper names are in large capital letters (ALLEN and FALGOUT, for example), a practice common to family history nationally and locally, which is said to ease scanning for the most central information desired by readers.

Other Remembered Records and Memory Traces

What other traces of the past were present in family life to enliven among these people an interest in family history? Questions in the interviews with family historians that tried to approach this first coming to records, this archivalization, were:

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6 Ibid.
What individuals or experiences had the strongest effect in your beginning and continuing with family history? What did you know about your ancestors before you began researching them? What sorts of written or photographic documents existed about your ancestors? Who had these documents? Where did they keep them? How did you learn about these documents?

For many interviewees, the first inclination seemed to be uniquely conceived. Over half initially stated they had no recollection of knowing anything about their ancestors in childhood; they had no memory of having records in their childhood homes. When probed, “None?”—half of these then responded that “well, yes,” there were birth certificates, school records, and immunization records, usually kept by mothers in shoeboxes, closets, under beds, in a safe, or even in an ottoman. All of the interviewees remembered photographs, but only half remembered photographs going back past the generation of their parents. Seventeen of the twenty-six volunteered during probing that their grandmothers had shown them albums, scrapbooks, and other family mementos.

Yet, four interviewees remembered being invested early with family history. For Annette (b. 1937) and Louis (b. 1946), memory texts were all around them. For Annette, genealogy came in “tales” told at family gatherings. “After the music they’d have coffee and that’s when they’d sit around the big oak table and ... we’d just go lean up against our mother or daddy or aunt and listen to them talk.”

In Louis’s home, grandparents, parents, and sometimes an aunt or uncle discussed portraits, memorabilia, “even a kitchen pot” in terms of “who they had once been or belonged to.” He also recalled an older “cousin.... She lived to be ninety-four years old, and she would regale us with stories of her father who fought in the Civil War and all ... her childhood memories.” In the multi-generational home, “My great-grandparents ... the head of the family, matriarch and patriarch of the family [and] everyone came to see them
on every holiday. It was just a given. And they would talk about their lives.” Another interviewee, Ingrid (b. 1941), also locates an appreciation of the past in particular family and societal circumstances:

I would say that my parents, from my childhood, would always tell stories of their childhood and about their families. And my mother had scrapbooks and I still have those scrapbooks. And I learned to make scrapbooks as a child and it just became part of me. It was an extension. I guess maybe an element of my own personality? And the family had letters, original documents, immigration papers. We’re predominately a Catholic family, so-- In fact, I can show you the box of what I have: a drawing, a painting that I have in the dining room of the family home in Germany on my dad’s side, just lots of photographs, lots of photographs.

Only one person recalled records being especially given to her. This was Catherine (b. 1959) who spoke of her paternal grandmother’s gift:

The day she died, the day before, I was at her home … I was young. Twelve. And she basically said, ‘Take these things, if you don’t get these, you’ll never get these, if you don’t take them now.’ And, I had to walk with it. Because she was too sick…. She said, ‘Take these.’ … That had an impact…. I knew that there was something there that I needed to treasure.

More similar to the others who recalled no records from childhood was Paul (b. 1940) who began family history because, on his return from the army in the 1960s, his mother “had acquired a family Bible and in the back of the Bible there was a foldout chart for family history.” She urged him to fill in the chart. He thus remembered himself as creating “the first” of his family’s conscious efforts to remember the past. But later he interjected that there were “one uncle and one great-uncle who had family information,” one who had “done some genealogy” and could “give” him “names,” and the other who “had a little prayer book, listing one of my great-great-grandfather’s … it had written in it where they came from in Germany and the birth dates of all of their children, some of whom had died as infants.”
A number of interviewees also soon qualified their interests in family history as being aided by someone they had initially forgotten. In addition, in five interviews, there was some sense of specific cultural climates in which records were kept within the home. Like Ingrid, Rosemary (b. 1925) believed that German immigrants brought and taught their German-American children a strong tradition of records keeping: “Confirmation papers, military records, letters, they saved them all.”

Ethnicity itself was considered a lived and living path to records. Acadians, Canary Islanders, and Sicilians were groups whose memories were mentioned around dinner tables and at family gatherings. Anthony (b. 1934) discussed his interest in family history as beginning in adulthood because his Sicilian family “had no records.” But then he remembered to add, “There was always a portrait.” It was of his grandmother’s parents, who, when their child left for the U.S. in 1903, gave her this parting gift, an image of themselves. “They said to her, ‘Take this because you’ll never see us alive again,’ which was true. And we kept that over the years.”

These accounts indicate how the interest in family history emerged first from within the extended family and indicate too something of recordkeeping cultures within families. The transmission of materials and stories is usually the job of someone in the family, a role so unstated as to be often forgotten.

**Why Begin Family History? Why Collect Records?**

Questions about their initial interests in family history also led to discussions of meanings and motivations. The search for meanings revolved primarily around place: the chance to understand places no longer the same; people who traveled great distances to make new homes; and the interplay of sources held “somewhere else” that were required
to tell the bare minimum of ancestors’ lives. Again, the individuals interviewed believed that they had an individualistic response to records, but for the most part, they told stories of particular communities that instilled and still do instill a veneration for records, and a certain passion for finding the past of “average” people. The larger society, rather than the family at the breakfast table mentioned by Madeleine, was usually the focus of a fascination with records. Mentioned by fourteen of the interviewees were the histories of the cities where they grew up. Both Mobile and New Orleans (founded in the early 1700s) were thought of as places where “learning” the past “was encouraged.” Ten

mentioned the Catholic Church as instilling a curiosity about records.

For two of the interviewees who were Mormons, the imperative to remember concerned the teaching of the LDS church. As Maria (b. 1949) said: “The purpose, as Mormons, we have for family history, is to put us all together in heaven.” And as Rebecca (b. 1939) confirmed, “We believe in being sealed to our ancestors. You know, generation after generation, families stay together.”

For others, the perspective was not that different than that of the Mormons: family history connected them in some way to the family and to a fuller version of themselves than they might ordinarily have. As Gail (b. 1961) said

You do it to actually prove who you belong to. You know the old saying of, “Where did you get those blue eyes from? Or where did that blonde hair come from?” And everybody else has brown eyes and brown hair? Well it comes from great-grandpa so-and-so. That proving that is the main thing.

Recalling her visit back to the town of her ancestors, Catherine stated: “I hadn’t even seen anybody that looked like me. So, when I went to there, and I knocked on the
door, I was like, ‘Oh, my gosh, you look like my father.’ So there’s a baseline. Before it was like being adopted. And you don’t even know this whole side of the family.”

Overall, motivations fell into three categories. First, interviewees see the legacy of family history as part of what they want to leave their children or other relatives. Second, they see family history as a way of explaining the world around them, of finding a sense of themselves and a sense of belonging to a particular group, nation, or type of family. Third, they simply enjoy the never-ending clues they could follow, the expanding world of knowledge.

How did they come to these meanings and motivations? Some recalled coming to family history after experiencing a change in family structure, usually some life-changing event. Others remember coming to family history through a general curiosity about the past. Others spoke of history itself, especially a local history. Yet others place their interest in family history in a devotion to a particular ethnic group.

To Understand Life-Changing Events

Births, illnesses, and deaths often led to the first search for records. The birth of a first child brought the need to know family names, which led to wanting to know more about naming patterns in general, and about the lives of people who held the same names. Or, as one said (and as is said often in the blogosphere), “I became myself an ancestor.” Another spoke of a cousin who had an unhealthy child, “so there was need to know who else in the family had had a cleft palate.” Unexpected deaths also brought a search for genetic causes, searching “through what medical records survived.” Death in the family meant seeing cousins at funerals, and this often led to wanting to know more about distant and not-so-distant relatives. In learning of the death of relative from old age, there
came a realization that a connection to older generations and one person’s lifetime of hearing and interpreting family history had ended.

To Satisfy Curiosity

Eighteen of the interviewees described themselves as “just curious,” or “always curious.” What did this mean? Six remembered gravestones. Said one, “I would look at the names ... all over the cemetery.” Ten interviewees recalled the New Orleans custom of the cleaning or painting of tombs. The ownership of the burial plot transmits memory, makes one “curious about those people in the tombs, on the walls.”

For others, the past was intriguing because it was “here and now.” In this, seven spoke again of the histories of Mobile and New Orleans and the people there. Landmarks, including statues, but also the “streets—I was always wanting to know why a street was named what it was”—were recalled as part of this coming-to-family history.

To Find A Local Past

Fifteen others also wanted to “use history” locally and personally. They remembered classroom learning on European history as “boring,” or interesting only in “the parts that tell me about my ancestors and why they left.” Even parts of U.S. history were found objectionable. As stated: “They force us to learn everybody’s family in history: politicians, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, etcetera, etcetera. So I said, ‘Why not study my own history and get some pictures?’”

To Find Obscured or Forgotten Identities

Migration, to most family historians, meant a loss of family memory, and thus the need to find records. As Armand noted,

Inquisitiveness ... is probably true of all people everywhere, or many people. They want to know who their people were. But here in the U.S., well it is
compounded … because we ask, “Why did they leave there to come here? What did they do to survive here?”

Besides the photograph of his great-grandparents, Anthony felt family history placed him closer to understanding a memory from childhood of an August celebration of the feast of Gesù Salvatore, Patrono of Cefalù. This was the ancestral village, but so too was “the ancestral village here in New Orleans because they had this group. They planned the celebration and they helped one another. Funerals, a mausoleum, sickness, papers for new immigrants, language classes.” He wanted then “to actually walk the places where my ancestors walked.” This meant knowing more about residences in the city and elsewhere, as well as later trips to Sicily.

Similarly, William (b. 1966) wanted to explore his family within the context of Creoles of Color, and Thomas (b. 1940) wanted to explore his family within the context of African Americans. William thought identity issues came to him, who grew up in another state, even more forcefully than it did to people in New Orleans. About his home of childhood in a western state, he remembered “lots of different types of people: Hispanic and white and black and Asian … but there were no other mixed kids, mixed-race kids.” He recalled the thrill of listening as his older brother asked his mother questions on family history for a school project. “My mother, she said, ‘Well, you know my father was from the islands and a mixture of African and Portuguese’…. I then understood that she was of some mixture. And then they said … the word ‘Creole.’ And so that was identity.” As a second grader, hearing these answers, he began files on family history.

For Thomas, “getting the names is the first step.” This is because
these were people, enslaved and treated at best like children. It is about acknowledging and honoring their existence as full human beings. More than full in some cases, because they had to do so much to stay alive and not be bitter. Look at the black churches, amazing, that they dealt with all this.

**Processes**

These comments on vaguely remembered records but purposeful beginnings reveal a layering of the unstated, the forgotten, yet persistent vestiges of records in society, and thus, the forces at work for archivalization. Processes that follow these beginnings revolve around following clues to research materials, developing expertise by knowing context, joining with others to learn about records, and organizing work to meet particular needs.

*Research: A Dance between Records and Clues*

Twenty of the twenty-six family historians spoke of beginning with oral accounts, then going to city directories (that led to the geographic placement of grandparents and great-grandparents). Next, any consistent sequence of a process that could be established fell apart. Records consulted were ship manifest lists (that led to an image of countries and ports within countries); birth, marriage, and death records (that led often to discussions of religion); probate and conveyance records (that led to consideration of material wealth, land, and houses); and military records (that led to discussions of either reasons for leaving Europe or patriotic U.S. considerations). At the beginning, there was usually one private record of some sort. Later, relatives sent other private records: letters, scrapbooks, albums, photographs, invitations, clippings, oral history interviews, bible records, and various artifacts. Then, “I go back and forth. I look for whatever I can find.” Of all record types, census records were most often discussed within the context of creation with some
acknowledgement of the fallibility of the census taker (heads of households confused; slaves without last names made part of the family; the brother made into an uncle, and so forth). Transcribed versions of letters were valued as they showed a trail of concern, affection, and preservation, however “misspelled or potentially copied wrong, derivative,” as one said.

Enjoyment of this sort of research is one reason for continuing. For Lucy (b. 1955), this is the time that is questioning, yes, but passion is what drives it … it’s sweeping and in a very melodic—I would say it’s melodic because it’s peaceful. And it has got kind of flow to it. But it also has this urgency push behind it, you know, drive—to seek out the answers to the mystery.

Most of the family historians from the JGS and GRS who were willing to be interviewed had family who had lived in New Orleans for generations. In this “home,” family historians feel unusually lucky. Family historians in the GRS and the JGS divided themselves into groups studying Spanish and French colonial heritage; the influx of refugees from the Revolution in Saint Domingue (now Haiti); the Germans, the Irish, and the Sicilians who came in the mid to late nineteenth century; and New Englanders and others who settled the city after the Civil War. Ten interviewees wanted to be sure it was known that New Orleans was one of the largest cities in the U.S. during the nineteenth century. Thirteen pointed out that New Orleans was the second busiest port of immigration. Two mentioned French and German newspapers and schools of the city. All of these factors can be considered as extending the layers of ethnic complexity upon which family historians come to an interest in their work.
Sixteen of the interviewees mentioned the New Orleans Public Library Obituary Index as one of their initial steps in research. “You can find where they were buried and then find the cemetery records; and sometimes you can find a maiden name; and even the names of pall bearers are good clues.” First called the Louisiana Biography and Obituary File, this index was begun as a project of the Great Depression in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Staff hired especially for the project worked in the City Archives Department where the manuscript journals and ledgers of city government dating from 1769 were also held. But it was the newspapers, and especially the mention of specific families in obituaries, that intrigued the WPA workers. Over 214,000 names were indexed, and the project was continued by archivists, staff, and volunteers after the WPA project ended. The product they made remains rather unique for all of the U.S. Usually only much smaller cities with much shorter historical time spans attempt to provide such an index.  

The Obituary Index is, in the words of one family historian, “one of those blessings of the city, right up there with food and jazz, something that is special.”

Developing Expertise

Madeleine, one of the two who recalls reading obituaries as a child, also found her way to this index. But, next, she said, “You have to be more serious and learn about the rest of the types of records.” She did this by attending workshops (locally and regionally); joining family history groups and learning about records from other members; “visiting” genealogical websites; and reading books and online guides from various individuals,

other groups, libraries, and archives. All but five mentioned learning how to prove their work, rules of citation, and other aspects of “proof.” They were particularly sensitive to wanting others to know that they follow rules, a legacy of the schism between history and genealogy, the hierarchy of knowers mentioned in earlier chapters.

All the interviewees discussed at least one workshop or course. Yet for many, learning was a more complicated process. For Paul, first one must learn the city itself, or “any place your ancestors lived. And by this I don’t mean just knowing who settled there but really who was there keeping the records.” As he talks, he leafs through some transcribed records, typed pages that do not reveal the handwriting, pagination, or any other suggestion of who once made this list of baptisms. He comments on the handwriting of the priest all the same. Then he adds:

From the late part of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church here established what they called national churches, to deal with the immigrants. So up in the Irish Channel [as a section of the city of New Orleans is called] you used to have three churches within a two-block radius. You still have St. Alphonsus—which was the Irish church. Right across the street, St. Mary’s Assumption—which was the German church. On Jackson Avenue a block away, it was destroyed after the 1920 something hurricane, was the French church, Notre Dame. So you had three big Catholic churches within a three-block area serving the immigrant population and those were the quote national churches. Downtown the national German church was Holy Trinity and the French church, which was on the other side of Rampart Street, was Annunciation Church. Holy Trinity doesn’t exist anymore; Annunciation has only recently been closed. But my great-great-grandparents went there when they immigrated. At least they did [go there] after the children were older. They lived in that downtown area near Holy Trinity Church. But apparently they first lived further back from the river, they must have lived somewhere around Claiborne Avenue, which at that period, the 1870s, was at about the extent of civilization going in that direction, a sparsely populated neighborhood. A Catholic church was established there in 1870 and I’m sure that’s where grandpa got baptized but the records don’t start quite that early. For some reason they didn’t keep the records or the records didn’t survive whatever happened.
He tells more about the churches and their neighborhoods, which, for him, held records since they operated as small centers of life for so much of the city. So he stops to ask if this is truly understood. “Are you Catholic? And how long, again, did you say you had lived here?” He describes the import of the places, the atmosphere of the streets, the blocks that were actual “empires, you had their schools, their orphanages, each, at least five buildings, the convent, the priest’s house, and even things we forget today: gardens, stables, other working buildings.” He wants to tell too of differences between particular records keepers in the past:

The Spaniards were wonderful record keepers … I mean the early records, the Cathedral records, they are beautiful and they used good paper. A lot of good paper to write on so even if you were using the ink that bled through, even if you used that, the records are generally in better shape than the records from the late nineteenth century where they went to cheap paper, cheap volumes and where, not in all churches—some are better than others—where the handwriting deteriorated.

He knows these record keepers even in more specificity. Pointing to the slightness of one record book, he notes, “That one had an elbow problem. Do you know what that means? It means he used his elbow to hold a drink to his mouth more than to write down the birth, marriage, death, etc.”

Lisette (b. 1943) similarly discussed a colonial community of records:

We are really fortunate if we have French or Spanish ancestry, because the records go back so far and they’re so incredibly good. I think we are extremely lucky in Louisiana to have the kinds of records we do and I look at what other people have to struggle through, I feel very fortunate. And a lot of that is because of the civil law and the kinds of records we have to have because of our legal system. Notarial records are unbelievably rich and other places just don’t have that. Also, in South Louisiana, the Catholic records are unbelievable. So we have bodies of records that many other people don’t have. The Spanish colonial government in Louisiana kept the same kind of legal system that the French had introduced. And the colonial records created under that system are marvelous, with unbelievable information for genealogists…. So, good old Napoleon—no matter what you think about Napoleon, his great legacy was civil law, which in
certain places dictates how the records are to be kept. And they are fabulous records. For example, it’s Book One of the Civil Code (Of Persons) that tells how the civil registrations are to be kept for birth, marriages, and deaths. And even if you’re doing work in Germany, and you’re dealing with the part of Germany that was under the Napoleonic law, and you’re dealing with those Napoleonic records, they are marvelous. If you’re in France, it’s the same. The same is true in other parts of Europe that fell under Napoleon’s control. You get down to Louisiana; the nature of the records depends on the laws that control them. To a very large extent it comes down to that. And common law had different types of records, a whole different system of law that determined the kinds of records created.

Other less-skilled family historians also considered different environments in which records were created. They understand both the liberating and conservative sides of governmental oversight (“so you see the Germany of that time couldn’t feed its citizens so they didn’t mind these recruiting agents coming for my family, enticing them. They made records of their departure”), the quirks of different denominations (“so the Baptist records followed the minister so I was looking for his papers”); and other aspects unique to different recordkeeping practices of varying locales.

Yet, discussions and interpretations of records rarely appear in the local publications. Newsletter articles from the Mobile Genealogical Society are telling in this absence. From The Deep South Genealogical Quarterly 2006 volume, for example, one can find a listing of the “white baptisms (inclusive of illegitimate children and free colored children)” conducted during 1856 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Mobile. Compiler Anne Ruise places the names she has transcribed next to an image of the church and church statuary, evoking Christian Europe where such records were also kept. But Ruise mentions nothing about the records, what they looked like, who

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recorded them, where they were housed, where they are now housed. Her job is to transcribe them: to bring the names and dates alone into the present.

This orientation towards transcription with little contextual information is seen throughout many publications of genealogists across the U.S. In the Mobile newsletter, this pattern is evident in their index, which reveals pages and pages of muster rolls, cemetery lists, baptismal records, and so forth. Volunteers from the New Orleans GRS in their quarterly take a similar approach. Transcription is the great work of these societies.

Today, however, they see technology as changing their own work in gathering records. Family historians are no longer one of the main producers (transmitters) of those records. Instead, the Mormon Church and various institutional repositories are. Most of the family historians then are shifting their expertise to knowing about electronic databases, knowing about specific software to keep family records, and especially evaluating these technological offerings. All but seven family historians considered themselves adept and skilled in microfilm, software packages, databases, online searching, and email.

Technology extends both their geographic reach and their capabilities in making memories in a lasting form. As Madeleine (b. 1934) noted about her great-great-grandmother: “She came in August of 1853 to New York, with two other[s] with the same name…. Through this fellow in Bavaria who I email, correspond with … I have found her mother and her grandparents and a little bit of history about her.”

Family historians are astute about online access to materials. As mentioned, this is the area where their expertise now lies, as opposed to an earlier expertise in transcription. As Lisette (b. 1943) noted:

You have to sort of learn to discern between what is reliable and not reliable information. I always tell newcomers, “Reliable information is stuff where people have gone to foreign countries, or even this country for that matter, but mostly foreign countries and filmed actual records. And then the unreliable stuff is things that have been submitted by people, by individuals.”

She’s referring here to the split between records individuals can upload to various websites, including the Mormon databases, and those records created by governments and other organizations in their work. She is noting then the various registries of the past, another manifestation of the levels of Chapter Two, and the need to look at the context of records critically.

Great attention is also paid to various software programs. The advantages of entering data and sources for that data were mentioned by fifteen interviewees. In addition, online death indexes, passenger lists, and other databases from libraries and archives were very important to family historians, and knowledge of these, if not actual use, was important to album makers. The Internet especially “helps you find or push you in another direction to make you think about what to look for.”

The other real advantage of technology is found in more advanced science, in going beyond what written records exist to the record of genes. As Arden (b. 1940) noted, “I think it’s a major breakthrough. Because of lost records, it is, it will change so much.”

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14 Among family historians, the software from Ancestry.com, Familysearch.com, and other packages (Personal Ancestry Files, Family Historian, Roots Magic, Family Tree Maker) provided the technologically-produced files and reports that most excited them.
The steps in DNA testing make more connections across times and space, testing for example, Québécois males who know their ancestors began in a particular French village in the 1500s to others with the same name in Louisiana whose paper record only begins in Saint Domingue in 1760.

Extending this acknowledgement of technology’s role in accessibility, all the family historians save two mentioned a debt to the LDS church and its microfilming project, to Ellis Island databases, to military databases, and to efforts of the National Archives in the United Kingdom. In these discussions something akin to the knowledge about and pride in the Catholic and notarial recordkeeping systems was apparent. Various assertions about the quality and plenitude of records reflect back on the fact that the tools of family history have influenced the type of family history completed. Words such as “explosion,” “proliferation,” and “multiplication” were used to describe the impact of materials online. The Internet itself was credited with popularizing the use of records for family history. Four interviewees felt that the increasing number of family historians also motivated others to understand records. According to María, family historians are now more apt to consider that “access [to records] is a right of a democratic country.” In this, they shift what was once a private transmission further into the public realm.

Learning in Groups

Ingrid recognized how often “we stand on others’ shoulders.” Five other interviewees also mentioned their reliance on those who came before, as one said, “the centuries of accumulations of records.” This attitude is another part of their expertise, a belief in stages (and thus positivist) and relativity (and thus modern and postmodern). The National Genealogical Society (NGS) defines professional genealogists as “records
experts, research scholars, teachers, and entrepreneurs.” According to the NGS website, such people begin their pursuits as hobbyists, “progress from ‘looking up names’ to learning records, the laws under which those records were created, and the social and linguistic quirks that affect the interpretation of historic documents.”¹⁵ The experienced non-professional genealogists interviewed here developed similar expertise, and their newsletters and interviews reveal coordinated efforts to educate themselves and others about records.

Interviewees felt they could do this best in workshops and in informal gatherings of family historians. At meetings, monthly or bimonthly lectures are given by librarians, archivists, museum curators, and academics. The panel discussions of members center on problems they have: “Broken Branches,” “Brick Walls,” or simply “Finding Ancestors.” These discussions always involved stories that proceed through various layers of mysteries, new techniques, and newly-discovered documents.

Similarly, the newsletters of the Mobile and Jefferson Parish societies especially contain columns in which members report on visits to repositories. Other articles tell of virtual journeys and online records giving access to information about particular ancestors.

Of the twenty-six interviewees, five males and two females had published regularly in newsletters, with four winning national awards for their work. A series of articles dating from 2002–2005 by JGS member Michele LaPointe-Lehmann is instructive of this whole fabric of a body of work collected by networks of people and technology, then given to the group. LaPointe-Lehmann researches the Audet-LaPointe

Family, which, as she notes, follows the French and Canadian custom of an alias, a “dit name” given to a family name, and thus the hyphenated name remaining—a living memory in Louisiana. In 2005, she begins her article tying this name first to oral accounts: “I have long suspected, from stories that I heard from my grandmother, that the LaPointe family was somehow connected to Nicolas Audet dit Lapointe who had emigrated from France to Canada in the 1660s.” She visits the Chicago Historical Society and finds a document connecting the Louisianian and Canadian families—a letter telling of a cousin’s family, and his grandfather, born 23 March 1801 in Boucherville, Canada. She then turns attention to a website for the Association des Descendants de Nicolas Audet dit Lapointe, Inc.16 The website took LaPointe-Lehmann to the “extensive research” done today “by Gabriel Lapointe.” The website also is inclusive of all the distant cousins: “Nous avons la chance d’avoir un patronyme enraciné en terre de Nouvelle-France et en Amérique depuis environ 1663.”17 From them, she was able to trace her own family “from the youngest son … born in 1691.” Indeed, this website brings her to her own name, documented by someone in Canada.18

One family historian referred to LaPointe-Lehmann’s work as finding “parts of herself,” and added, What “luck that we get to do this.” Why luck? When she began in the early 1970s, “Ordinary people, like myself, did not do genealogy.” A number were conscious of “a sea change,” around the time of the Bicentennial (1976) and around the time of the publication and television series Roots (1976 and 1977). “This group wouldn’t really be here without this sea change,” one said. Bruce similarly commented:

In fact some of the early people would probably turn over in their graves, as the local phrase goes, if they would realize we have black people coming to meetings. We have Jewish people coming to meetings. They would literally croak if they weren’t already dead. They used to have this very elaborate membership application process which basically was trying to see if these people were black or Jewish. Once the younger folks got hold of the organization more or less we got rid of these—they weren’t written down anywhere they were just sort of an unwritten policy that was in place.

Certainly all the members of groups to whom I spoke delighted in the diversity of people doing family history. As Bruce mentioned, the experience with sharing across the color line has meant “a different America than I had when I grew up. Closer to what it was supposed to be.” How did he participate in this transformation?

I even have a parallel family to my family that is black Creoles. And I haven’t found the exact connection but I have been working with a black lady in Atlanta…. I was working with her documenting the black side of the family you might say. One of her ancestors was the slave of the sister of one of my ancestors way back in the early 1800s.

Other New Orleanians recounted a litany of African-American genealogy workshops, and six others, besides Bruce, spoke of uniting descendants of slave-holding families and the descendants of slaves. As one black man and one white man told me, they were both pleased to learn they were distantly related. As the youngest of three African-American interviewees, Nicholas (b. 1991) reflected, his work encouraged others from all races:

If we can find our history, well, it encourages others. I was received in the group in that way. They liked that I was young but they really liked that I could get to the past, and to a past so long denied…. And I am sure that I get more encouragement because it is slavery and that is such a big impediment to finding names and records. But what I find, then that encourages them.
On the other hand, at all the meetings and other gatherings, there were never more than two African Americans. Similarly, not everyone sees change in the groups, their membership, or their emphasis on helping one another. According to Ingrid:

There has been little change here, in New Orleans. No way. No, no, you can look at the Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans and then go to the Genealogical Society of Mobile and look at their periodicals, their journals, I mean. You want to know which one started first; they’re just absolutely identical. And even the personalities of the people involved are identical. But I noticed lately that Mobile--Because I subscribe to their genealogy site, is having more hands-on activities. Ours [New Orleans] it’s strictly speakers. And no one really, let’s see, how would I say this? Uh, crosses the boundary, in that, no one ever approaches anyone else with a problem or with an ancestor. You’re either supposed to already know that their lineage is back to the German Coast [a section settled early in Louisiana] or you don’t ask. Or you really don’t ask that group anything about research techniques, especially the Internet. Now, the Jefferson Genealogy Society is camaraderie personified, newsletter as opposed to a journal, meetings with really interesting speakers that, for the most part, are all giving genealogy subject matter. The Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans does not have that. Next month we’re having someone that’s going to talk on the two Marie Laveaus [a locally famous nineteenth-century leader of the voodoo movement and her daughter]. I mean, it’s not like having someone talk on the census records. But that group wouldn’t have anyone to do that.

From their newsletters, it is apparent that the JGS and the MGS host more parties, share more recipes in newsletters, and generally discuss events such as field trips much more frequently than does the GRS. However, many members in New Orleans belong to both metropolitan based groups.

Among those interviewed from all three groups, only three could be described as loners in any sense of the word. Even these three, who worked essentially alone and did not attend meetings, still belonged to one genealogical society, family name society, or hereditary society. Twenty belonged to more than one group. Fourteen participated in groups devoted to family history once a week or more. Eleven participated once a month or more, and two participated once a year.
Organizing Work

There is some conformity to their organization of work. Most kept their information in binders, and spoke of being advised to do so in early classes, or early readings on family history. As Gail stated, “I have binders broken down by last name, like I was taught. And that’s pretty much how I’ve done it…. There’s a good strong fifty [binders].” Seven recalled being told to find secondary sources to help them as they proceeded. As Ingrid mentioned,

I have a little library I can show you. But what I have found is that some of the older people in both sides of my parent’s families, and even with [husband’s] mom’s families, when they find someone that’s truly interested in keeping the family together and keeping these records, they turn them over to you. And so now I have odd pieces, scrapbooks—well that’s not odd, but gold watches that belonged to this one, or a pair of eyeglasses that belonged to that one, or a rosary or a Bible, or that sort of thing. So papers are in acid sleeves, plastic, fireproof and then I have archival boxes that I store for each individual and a list regarding what I have for them.

Most of the interviewees had devoted time to organization itself. Armand told me of the type of notebook he uses and why (black and white cardboard binding since it will not fall apart). Arden (b.1940) spoke of different colored inks. Robert (b. 1938) noted: “Well, I have books that show everything. Any time I find some information on an uncle or an aunt or a cousin, I put it in there…. Right now I have them by family. Each family has its own section in my box and in my computer.”

Lucy noted another method, not mentioned by others:

I don’t recommend erasing. I recommend you draw one line through it and continue on because that way you can see where your mistakes were. What direction you started going in … you can always go back and see where, what direction you started to go in that you know didn’t work.
Influences: Gender and Migration

In these processes, there is an assumption that “someone will one day find my work,” and that the work is especially interesting because it tells “where we came from.” The “someone” is often thought of as a woman. Of the seven interviewees who mentioned leaving their work to another person, all of these were women leaving records to women (daughters, daughters-in-law, nieces, fellow family historians who were women). Four men and two women mentioned leaving records to institutions. How does one interpret this? Are women more apt to be modest about their records? More private about their records? Are men more apt to consider their records worthy of an institution? These are unanswered questions, but what is clear is that there are gender differences in consideration of records.

Migration is a more overtly considered concept than is gender for family historians. As the metanarrative of all family history in the U.S., it reshapes itself into a pride with places such as New Orleans and Mobile that family historians see as having long histories of different waves of settlers.

Gender as Perceived by Family Historians

Judging from their histories and newsletters, women in the family history groups of Mobile, Jefferson Parish, and New Orleans always played a strong role, but leadership remains governed by gender stratification. The MGS, from 1960 to 1989, elected seven men as presidents and two women, and similarly, in the period 1981–2008, they elected three women and eight men as presidents. Since their foundings, all three genealogical societies have had more women members than men, more women than men as committee
chairs and secretaries, and more men as presidents. As noted in Chapter Four, women predominate in membership, but they also predominate in meetings.

To ask about gender, interviewees were queried in this way:

In general some of the publications on family history that I’ve seen begin with the statement that every family has its own historian, someone who keeps family records. Can you tell me what you think about this statement and also how this plays out in your own family?

After they answered this, they were then directed back to a general overview, with “Do you think this person is more likely to be a woman or a man?” Nine of the interviewees felt this person was more apt to be a woman, one felt it was more apt to be a man, and sixteen felt it depended, varied, or that this person was apt to be whoever might have the most interest in family history. As Lucy noted, “I think they come in all sizes, all colors too. All shapes and all sexes. However many there are.”

Among those who believed a woman more likely to be a family historian than a man, three were men themselves. Yet, one of these, Chuck, discussed how he got his information from other men (his father and a male cousin). When queried about this, “Except your father kept all those records. Right?” he replied, “He had very few. And my cousin—he had loads of stuff. But he had too much. And so, he told me, ‘When I get time, I’ll get my wife to copy them, I’ll call you to come here pick it up. So there again, is the woman.’” Most books and online publications advise family historians to think strategically about who would keep family records, usually advising beginners to turn first to the oldest member of a family. Since women live longer than men, these older relatives are often women, according to one interviewee—“gatekeepers” to two interviewees.
For other interviewees, family history gatekeepers were those who inherited or were given the family Bible, but there was no consensus about the gender of this Bible keeper. For example, Catherine thought that women entered births, marriages and deaths in Bibles, and that the family Bible was passed to the oldest daughter on her marriage. But Anthony, Robert, Emily, and Maria all thought the Bible was passed to the oldest son when he married. There also was no agreement if this practice was related to any particular ethnic group.

For the one person who thought family history more apt to be a hobby of men, her reason revolved around the issue of time. "Men have more time," said Rebecca. She then referred to the reading room of the library of the Latter Day Saints. "We have three men here reading, or four men here reading and one lady." She was a Mormon herself, and in her generation particularly (born before 1950), it was male children who were encouraged to write family histories. Despite this she added, "My husband doesn’t like genealogy. He’s not a patient person … but his aunt lives across the street from us…. And she knows his family history for him."

From six-days’ time total spent in the reading rooms of the Latter Day Saints in Mobile and in Metairie (the latter serving all of the New Orleans metropolitan area), most readers were equally split between men and women, with seventy-five percent of the users being from outside the LDS church.

Despite the fact that the question about gender seemed to surprise them, family historians were interested in responding. As Thomas stated,

It is one of those things, like African-American history, until someone asks, people who are not touched by it won’t consider it. It may well have been a way for women to have some power and it may have been that they, more than the men, were just interested in families, in the way people were shaped in families.
Arden similarly was pleased to ponder whether women and men were equal in numbers among gatekeepers to the past within families.

Never crossed my mind. But then it was important to what diseases the family got. Say your aunt had a child who was blind, well, the woman remembered that when she was pregnant. She might want to write that down more than a man would. And then women didn’t get the name you know. The family history was the compensation prize.

As Thomas noted, “women as history keepers” are sometimes “outside the family.” He said,

Think about who is staffing those courthouses and who is the librarian. All women. And in my case, it was the church historian. One of the mothers of the church did a lot of documentation. And she died at 101 or 102 years of age, and she had a lot of personal information that she gave to me.

On the other hand, as Ingrid and William related, the keeper of records is often determined by who remains in a particular house or a particular locale. According to Ingrid,

In reading how to improve my genealogy process, I was reminded that my dad’s first cousins and my mom’s first cousins all had the same grandmother. And so, in my dad’s case, since his family’s home had been burned, I thought, well, I would check his cousins. And I just found a wealth of information there. And I find that most of the record groups from the immigrants that are maintained usually stay with the last family that that person is living with before they pass away.

As William similarly stated, the family’s record keeper in his father’s family was my dad’s sister, [because] of all my dad’s siblings, she didn’t leave the area she grew up in. She stayed there, she married someone local, she pretty much stayed within five miles of where most of them were born. So she was the one. She knew the most family history of her generation of my dad’s side.
In other words, if women do not move around the country as much as men, if they stay close to parents, it is they who inherit family papers.

On the other hand, said Thomas, “It depends on if a family is matriarchal or patriarchal and a lot of that depends on how many daughters, how many sons, how the money is earned if any, if there is a family home passed to the daughters or sons. So many things.”

Thoughts on Migration

Similarly, family historians considered not just the metanarrative of migration, but also various steps and sidesteps, and various complexities. Again, they were cognizant that they had the most information on people who had lived longest in one place, either in a particular place in the U.S. or elsewhere. In speaking of one of his “brick walls,” Paul mentions having practiced family history for almost thirty years, but not being able to find any records about where his great-grandfather had been born. “Somewhere in the Black Forest of Germany” was the most precise answer he was given verbally by his mother and his great-uncle. Even the baptismal papers of the first-born son of this man had been lost by the church. Paul didn’t know why:

So, no church records and no other clues about where he was from. He was German, but even that, well it wasn’t really Germany when he came over. Then one day I was cleaning. My grandparents had an old country house over in Covington. After my grandmother died, I was over there one day and we were looking through things in her bedroom … and here was the pipe.

He brings out a white ceramic pipe with red lettering on its base. He encourages smelling the lingering scent of tobacco.

The date on this is 1865 and this was my great-great-grandfather’s—my mother’s great-grandfather’s. This is the only way that I ever found out where he was from. Apparently, he got this when he went into the Prussian Army. It has his name and
then it says, “From Steinach, the Greater Steinach Grenadiers Infantry regiment to Constance in 1865.” That’s what the German says: the departure of the first of March, 1865. So on the first of March 1865 he left a little town, Steinach, which is where he is from, and went into the German military in Constance on Lake Constance in 1865. And in 1869 he immigrated to New Orleans. He came here. No one in the family knew where he was from. But sure enough when I went back using the records from the Latter Day Saints to Steinach and I found his baptism.

He pauses again to make sure the whole of the story is apparent. “When I went back looking through the church record, there’s his baptism which gave me then the name of his parents…. And it is all because this [the pipe] was saved.”

Still for many other interviewees, accounts of migration concerned a different sort of movement, more akin to the sentiments of President Obama as noted in Chapter Two. Yet even here their responses provided a nuanced understanding of American migratory sacrifice and hardship. For Louis, knowing something about his ancestors redeems other parts of the past. In exchanging papers with distant cousins in France, he states that

They were way over there and yet we had all this in common. It made me consider the world in a more kindly way. I thought of my people, well they had Saint Domingue, slavery, the horrible things, Sicily, poverty. But they had this sociability. We met through this sociability. It couldn’t be all bad.

Similarly, as one person said at a meeting:

Take the Acadians, take the Africans, take the Cherokees on their Trail of Tears, there was a lot of forcible damage done in making this country. Not everyone up and decided, hey, how cool it would be to move to New Orleans. So, yes, we look back and say thank you, God, for these people who lived long enough to have a child who had a child who had a child, you know, survived right on down the line to me.

Family history’s popularity unfolds outward from this idea of placing not only the self within a collective history of migration, but also some connection to perseverance within a specific migration.
Interpreting the Work of Family History

Despite this movement towards collectivity and specificity, more often than not, the interviewees still explained their “passion” with family history as their own, rather than something of interest to many others. Even given the vastness today of family history, over half of them characterized their pursuits as individualistic, even lonely. Perhaps because their interests are in families, they remain planted themselves within their families, more so than within the family-history community. As Gwendolyn (b. 1974) noted, “I’ve sent letters to all of my relatives, saying, ‘Hey, if you have any information, if you have any pictures?’ And very, very few of them have even bothered to respond.” Or as Emily stated, “Very few people are really interested, in family history.” And as Lisette elaborated,

You’d like a lot more family members to be that interested. But for example when I first started, I, for Christmas, did nice little books for all of my siblings, not unlike lots of other people, right? I put it into little binders, with family group sheets and the genealogy chart, which is what most people look at, and a few additional things—photographs, Jean-Paul’s oath of allegiance to King George, which is the first documentary proof we have of our ancestor in the New World. I had gone to England and found that in the Public Records Office in London. And so it was a really neat, big manuscript. And so I had that reproduced and everybody got a copy with the translation and they all now have it framed in their houses. But it went along with a booklet of print outs of everything else…. [But] lots of family members aren’t interested. So you’ve got to do this research while disabusing yourself of the notion that all of the family is going to be just so grateful that you’ve spent all of this time doing this, because a lot of them aren’t going to be touched by it. You ask yourself constantly why on earth you are spending all of that time digging up all that stuff. Who cares?

It is possible then to understand their family history work as being both social and lonely, both private and public, both on the forefront of technology and at the same time, incomplete in the small percentage of records that might be needed for one completed project. For interviewees, the leads found in the stories held clues that took them on
journeys to records, but over half of them mentioned the work as “never ending.” This final section then discusses transmission and pluralization of records as demonstrated in this ceaseless pursuit.

Transmission

In both the finding and recontextualization of records within a particular family history, issues of transmission ran throughout the conversations with family historians. These issues concern current interpretations, sharing of records, and the longevity of records overall. First, family historians want their collections of records to be “of use” to others. Robert explains: “You take what you find, and put it in a form that makes sense enough to you to give to someone else, in this case, to leave for my children. But first something has to be there.” What did he mean?

You have got to make sure it is in a form someone can understand. Or grab a hold to. Like my children and my grandchildren, I try to tell the granddaughter, she’s interested in cheerleading, so I talk of what her great-grandmother did when she was her age. I get a school record; I got pages of school records. Try to interest her in those.

Among those most skilled, the desired form is some sort of report or book. Four interviewees spoke of intentions to make a bound volume of some sort, “a book,” or as one said, “a monograph” that symbolizes the passing of the records back into the public sphere, the presence of more than one copy going to family, to libraries, to the genealogical societies. Louis stated, “I should put it in some kind of book form because one of these days I’ll drop dead, and all these years of work people are going to put into a box out on the curb.” Or as Bruce noted, he is working towards “the stage where you could share it with people through publication or what not…. Maybe put a chapter of a family in some sort of publications so it could be shared with others.”
Some apologized that they hadn’t yet made a book on their family. To twelve
family historians, disseminating their findings could not be considered until one had
“more proof.” This made the work “never ending.” They want more records before, as
one said, “I make my book.” Twenty of the twenty-six interviewees mentioned “proof” as
part of finding more “accounts,” more “details,” more documents, and needed before
reaching any stopping point for their work.

These products from research, for Paul, “should equal an account of lives, various
points of lives” and should then transmit accounts of the process:

The first things I guess, the documents, would have been in the Civil District
Court. They would have been conveyance records because in Louisiana—because
of the Napoleonic Code—females had to agree to the sale of any property. So if
you didn’t know—you might know your male ancestors’ surnames but you didn’t
know who they married because if you couldn’t find a marriage record you
sometimes couldn’t find out what the maiden name of the wife was. If you could
find a property sale you could find that out because Mrs. Cecile So-and-So, wife
of Mr. Different-Name So-and-So had to agree to the sale of that property. So
okay you’re already picking up information through these conveyance sales. You
write it down, add it to a file, whatever. It makes up the whole picture that you are
trying to get. If you can make yourself present it at a meeting, all the better, since
then what you have learned has an audience.

Sometimes the layers of the story are not as interesting as the route followed in
transmitting the story, but “you take it, you have to, since that is the point,” Lucy said.
What point is that? “Some truth. I won’t say it is the only truth, that’s what you learn, you
learn it’s a truth.” Other times, this learning is corrective and even healing. Gail told of
her family’s memory:

My mother-in-law, there was another story about how her uncle was shot and
ekilled and the whole works. And I was able to prove what actually happened.
Because he was on the police force, as was her father, the Irish family. And I was
actually able to get the actual police report. And also, he was brought to Charity
[hospital], where he did die a few days later. But I actually got the report, so I
could put the whole story together. So in the eyes of her being a child, I could
actually give her the true story behind it. There was some truth to it. Yes, he was shot, and he died, but how that happened.

Yet, outside the immediate family, records are very selectively transmitted. Ten mentioned not giving away copies, since they feared they would be “put on the Internet,” “just given away, all that work,” because “a bad experience” with someone else “claiming he’d done all the work,” and other fears of misuse. Only two were more philosophical about sharing, with one stating, “I would be happy if someone was interested enough to want this, and even if they didn’t give me credit, well, the information would be used.”

Because of the recent hurricanes and the potential and real loss from storms, all the interviewees had given more than passing thought to the survival of their lists of names, their booklets, their files, their records. Transmission for them is not a given. It requires various approaches to the safety of records: maintaining storage units above the third floor, duplicate records mailed to relatives in other parts of the country, and special methods of packing materials in waterproof containers.

Eleven had worked to find funding for various conservation efforts in libraries, archives, and courthouses. In terms of the longevity of their personal archives, however, none want to give their papers away before death. As Joan (b. 1927) noted, “I have left my records to the Mobile society, but I have also appointed [another woman member] as the one to go through and get them ready for them. They are not in good shape yet.” Or as Sheila (b. 1935) stated, “I put everything in binders by families. And I put all the information, all the know-how stuff in other binders. Color coded, so they can be left to either my children or the Jefferson society. But I wouldn’t say that I am done yet with
anything.” Five others who had considered these legacies also returned to the idea that so much work remained unfinished.

**Pluralization**

Pluralization, a gift of records to the world, then is complicated for at least some family historians with their fear of incomplete products, with their fear of others taking their work. What then is involved in any sharing of records?

Each family historian allowed that their files and papers are valuable, potentially to others, even in some unfinished quest. But there remains, for most of them, the necessity of parceling out what they know at meetings and workshops, and to a limited extent, among family members and distant relatives. Ideally, they see themselves as stewards of family records. Hearing of a family Bible “that no one had paid attention to and I called this distant relative and finally persuaded her to let me have it,” is an example Bruce gave showing something of the roles of initiator, caretaker, and disseminator that family historians take. When he arrived to get the Bible, there were two, and he considers them now his “most prized possessions.” He “writes to other cousins … since they belong really to everyone. I am just entrusted with it, so I have to be sure I make it known and also pass it on.” As many theorists remind us, to become “archives” requires that private memories become public. Family historians understand a version of this stance in their insistence that “public” is defined by accessibility and preservation.

In an even more open attitude than others, Chuck succinctly stated his goals for a book of photocopies of all the records he had found. He wants it to be “handy. That’s

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19 Reed, “Beyond Perceived Boundaries,” 178.
what I want to write at the beginning of the book: Someday I hope this work will come in handy.” But Chuck’s preliminary efforts at this book, many see as unworthy of the type of effort they want. The manuals discuss pedigree histories (ascending or descending, with the latter being more heritage album-like in a focus on one particular family), genealogical histories (single-surname studies, or full-family studies), hourglass genealogies (again like heritage albums in concentration on a not-too-distant forbear), or a multivolume series.21 “Handy,” for many, was not good enough for their “rules-based” world.

Pluralization then, in some ways, remains circumscribed. Yet, they do add to what they see as the layers of the past, and recall again, “someone will use it.”

Finally, too, pluralization in another sense is achieved. The interviewees consider the community of family historians as teaching about the many different types of people.

Family history, according to Robert:

allows you to meet people you would not normally meet. It allows conversations to take place. It allows—you become involved in a very unique community that is worldwide. It educates and, I would hope, breeds tolerance. Because not everybody comes from a socially acceptable family, all the way down the line. So you see where you’re not purist and, hopefully, it allows you to have a better understanding that we’re a global community and not some Nazi, you know, cookie-cutter type thing. I think that’s helpful.

Settings in the Network of Memory

There are two walls of memories in Sheila’s house. One wall in the small entry way features all her children and grandchildren, with one centered photograph called “Bienvenu of the Month.” Another wall, this one in the kitchen, contains photos of John and Robert Kennedy, Pope John XXIII and Pope Benedict XVI, as well as group photos

of the family, including her grandparents home in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, her
great-grandparents home in Mid-City New Orleans, her husband’s family house in rural
Louisiana, and a framed postcard showing the village where her great great grandmother
lived in Ireland. Her walls are representative of what she wants the family to envision,
images that tell of her interest in them, in memory itself, and in those connections she
makes for them to the wider world.

Like Sheila, all the family historians choose their own ways but all work
dynamically with the past, especially coming to records from, or creating, environments
that encourage thinking about the past and undertaking projects that can show them proof
of the past. Yet, it is not only the positivist tradition of truth, but also the affordance of
records that family historians appreciate, an affordance of relativity. They do not expect
quick answers, they expect rather to see connections that will help them understand the
present world.

Finding records, Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres stated, “Frees
genealogists] to search for meaning…. As a result they are less concerned about every
story being true and can seek identity though more subtle and perhaps metaphorical
meaning in the stories.”22 But the stories are unending ones, and thus one returns to
records. As Arden said, “Resolving problems is waiting and seeing what’s next.” For
family historians the unending nature itself is the meaning. It is a process of knowledge
maturation, or more simply put, “a belief in learning as you go along.”

The learning trajectories the family historians described included struggles with
how records were shaped by different national practices, by different languages, by the
destructions of wars, as well as by their own struggles with spellings from other times

22 Yakel and Torres, “Genealogists as a ‘Community of Records,’” 108.
and places, and travel to find the records of family in others places. To return to the beginning of this chapter, for these people, memory is not symbolically a palace of some magnificent quality, or even a dovecote. Instead, memory, at its best, shows journeys already made, and those yet to come. Bruce and Madeleine were both traveling to distant places to find records in the summer of 2007, to meet distant cousins known only via email. Their progression to a new network of knowing the past is mirrored in memory studies. Now memory is understood as shaped by neural networks, organizing matter,23 in a way not so different from the passages family historians take between mediating technology, records, people, across oceans and time and back again. Family historians seek not one place of memory but many potentially connecting and enlivening places.

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CHAPTER SIX
HERITAGE ALBUM MAKERS

I kind of end up in between scrapbookers and family historians because I’m the oldest of sixteen grandchildren, sixteen cousins. My mom is the oldest and I’m the oldest, so it’s kind of been passed down to me. Everybody in my family has just thrown their pictures at me, and the stories behind the pictures too. And it was supposed to be that way, I guess.

Francesca (b. 1962)

So the first thing that I did was I sent out a letter to the whole family, just explaining what I’m doing…. And then I asked each person to complete the questionnaire. Sign it, with their own handwriting, of course. And that was the beginning…. I asked for favorites, for example, color, food, music, hobbies and pastimes. Because I just didn’t want it to be a just fact—born, married this date, died this date, I wanted to get personality … movies, and wishes, and the greatest love…. I wasn’t sure how I was going to theme the book. So that’s why I asked about colors and certain things. And then say…. If someone chose purple, for their page, and I’ll use purple as their background page. To kind of incorporate, I just wasn’t sure about how I was going to lay it out. So I wanted to get as much information as possible, to kind of trigger it and look for, maybe, the commonalities between all of the answers. And say okay, this is how the book will go: I kind of wanted it to happen organically, in a sense. And that’s why I asked about questions all over the place … greatest love and if you were a title, book title, or movie title. Just to get an idea of the energy of my family members.

Yamilee (b. 1975)

This chapter describes heritage album makers, like these above, who tell of the beginnings and processes of their work. The chapter is divided between descriptions of settings, reasons given for choosing to represent families in albums, processes of finding and keeping records, and the influences of gender and migration. Finally, an
interpretation of these descriptions as part of the transmission and pluralization of records concludes the chapter.

**Settings: People in Houses of Memory**

Demographic information on album makers is presented in Chapter Four but briefly noted here is their division between twenty-five women and one man. They are solidly middle class.

As noted in Chapter One, they search for and create genealogical information, but they do so within scrapbooking groups. In the 1990s and early 2000s, heritage albums were considered one of the first memory products every serious scrapbook maker should make.¹ Of the fifty types of albums that Cheryl Lightle and Rhonda Anderson listed in their 2002 account of the history of Creative Memories, heritage albums were first ranked. “Your heritage album can include anything that links you to the past: sepia photographs, pages from an old diary, genealogy charts, the deed for family property, and stories….” One is encouraged to add “details about the lifestyle of your ancestors… also stories that lay bare your relatives’ hearts: how did they think, what did they feel, what touched them deeply.”²

Why make such an album? One will, according to Anderson and Lightle, get to “know your family better,” be “assured that your family history will not be forgotten.” Other scrapbook advisors and vendors promote similar purposes. Heritage albums “open doors to insight, truth, and a richer life today … and tomorrow.”³ Yet, as the introductory excerpt by Francesca suggests, heritage album makers place themselves somewhere

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³ Ibid., 68–69.
between two communities of family history. One looks to them then to explain something of both worlds.

Album makers’ homes are one place to begin this comparative exploration. In the homes of album makers, memory has not yet spilled over into as many rooms as it has in the homes of family historians. Visiting fifteen album makers, one sees that their homes are larger, grander in interior design, and also better tended, at least for a guest, than the ten homes seen in visits to family historians. Generally, album makers appear as organizers; family historians, as absent-minded professors. Album makers have framed images in every room, bookcases of albums, specially-made sorters where photos can await labeling, and various bags and boxes generally tucked away. Family historians have surfaces throughout the house covered in files and books.

Some of these differences may be because the majority of album makers are younger than family historians. Album makers do not have yet a lifetime of accumulations. Only two of the album makers had been at work on albums for more than twenty years, as opposed to sixteen of the family historians who had worked more than twenty years. Also, among the fourteen album makers who were ages 31–45, twelve had young children. Thus they have houses that have to accommodate these children, as well as the serious leisure habits of the adults in the family.

Critically, too, here, album makers’ houses of memory are linked to one form of memory, the heritage album. The purpose of the album is to contain memory, in all senses of the word contain. Albums hold and tidy memory. Though there is much discussion in the blogosphere on how scrapbooking supplies come to be “stuffed in every
corner” and every other household chore is overlooked, the houses of heritage album makers were almost uniformly immaculate. There was a sense that a deliberate management of clutter was made, either for me, the researcher, or for themselves and for their families. Tending memory is a private but orderly concern for them, not unlike that practiced by generations of women who from Greeks who worshiped the quiet Hestia, to noblewomen of the middle ages in their memorialization of the dead, to Catherine Beecher and her nineteenth-century followers, to readers of Martha Stewart’s magazine and countless other women’s journals today.

The scrapbooking movement places heavy emphasis on this traditional, caretaking posture. Making memory books should bring beauty, not inconvenience others. All scrapbook vendors and websites provide album makers with advice on “shaping spaces,” which are never called their “archives” and never called “studios.” Instead, album makers call these spaces the “scrapbook room,” the “scrapbook corner,” “my room,” “my craft room” or “my sewing room,” or in one case, “my study.”

First Remembered Memory Forms: Families, Stories, and Places

Heritage album makers observe these names but they are considered more studious, “bookish,” and even, “preoccupied” than other types of scrapbookers. For these album makers, an interest in the past overrides their interest in scrapbooks about present day life. Heritage album makers place this interest in various aspects of their own pasts: their

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position in the family, family relationships in general, and especially, a family emphasis on place. When asked what made them begin to collect materials, seventeen of the album makers referred to places known in childhood, and to the way these places were made known to them. They were quick to show or to recall maps, postcards, and other visual images of cities where their families had lived. Introduced in Chapter One, Anna (b. 1922) is one who remembers this connection between family and place, and her later interest in making albums:

My interest came from the fact that when my grandfather used to—We all lived together on [street name, at specific street address], I’ll never forget. And he’d sit on the porch mainly on a Sunday and he’d have some of his grandchildren there at the house and he would sit there and tell us the story of his family and when he was growing up—and he grew up here in New Orleans. And, uh, it was interesting and it just grew from that; I really do believe that’s what it grew from.

He encouraged her to know places.

I would go down and just look at the old places in the Quarter and I knew from my grandparents’ stories that they told me, I knew that that’s where they grew up. Especially my grandfather. And so I was able to uh, I started, you know, just scouting around and asking questions, and asking questions.

Her grandfather gave more clues about places and how these influenced who one was, especially how one was a New Orleanian. His life began in

a little small town up the river and [he] came to New Orleans as a young boy. And he would always tell us: remember, you’re French and you’re the full French. And you’re not, he would say, and as I heard him, when I was small, I heard him say boogalee. And he meant you didn’t come from, from out [rural Acadian Louisiana and thus earlier Canada], you came from the Alsace, the French from Alsace-Lorraine. We weren’t boogalee. We were the true French.
For other album makers, also, to know a place was to become a part of a particular neighborhood, a city, state, or even this new country. The one male album maker, Simon (b. 1927), remembered:

Mama collected things about New Orleans that maybe don’t relate to our family but do just because our family has been in New Orleans for so many generations. She wasn’t from here so she wanted that history. She married in, as they say. She made herself a part of the city by collecting its history. And that kind of intertwines with the family history because those things are connected to me and why I make the scrapbooks.

Simon had made more than 140 scrapbooks, with seven from the 1990s concerning the homes of families, their geographic placement, their interiors, the families who lived in each one.

Linda (b. 1937) similarly recalled homes as living connections to the past. Her great-aunt and uncle were farmers who lived in a house without running water. Visiting them, she saw how “They still lived like their parents had, in a way that we never got to see, and so then we asked about them, the ones who had come before, the way they were, and what their children were like, who they were, and what they did.”

Other Remembered Beginnings

Central to other album makers’ beginning work is home photography, mentioned in twelve of the interviews. Photographs connected the family within itself and with the world. As Isabelle (b. 1954) recalled,

I remember pictures that my mother would show us, of the signing of the World War II [peace treaty between the US and Japan], the Americans and the Japanese on a boat. There’s a name for it. But my mother had a friend who was on that boat. And so I remember those pictures. But I also remember pictures that … my grandmother, her room had a lot of old pictures. And she had a cedar chest and more old pictures there…. To me it was our personal history. Whether it was national or local or what, or old Life magazines, if we had the pictures, it was our history.
Were birth certificates, school records, and other paper materials recalled with this same ability to enhance some picture of the self in relation to the past, to achieve some sort of metaphoric insertion of the self into history? Mostly not. Only four album makers spoke of these types of records with more than slight acknowledgement. One person was Linda who grew up on military bases. In the army, documentation was almost daily. They document everything they can about your father since he is representing the United States. And they document you too, because you also represent the country when you are on the base. And if anything happens, the papers prove who you are.

She also recalled letters concerned with reporting to duty and discharge records bandied about in conversations between children on the base. She remembered letters that held foreign money, newspaper clippings, or advertisements in foreign languages. Papers from other places were a sort of currency “for us kids.” They were part of “show and tell.”

**Why Begin Heritage Albums? Why Collect Records?**

Different environments then influenced present concerns to know the past. Yet, the past demands more of scrapbook makers than the present, so heritage albums are made sparingly in the ongoing activities of these women and one man. Records are not uniformly accessible to them, either from relatives or repositories. That is, the environments in which they live do not encourage library and archives use. Only four had ever visited an archives or library to find records, though these four plus six others had used archival and library sources online. The presence of online resources is clearly of significance to these new users of records.
But making a heritage album is also considered more difficult since one must understand and “think about it all” more than one would snapshots of day-to-day life. Darlene (b. 1967) and Claudette (b. 1960) spoke of these albums, nevertheless, as important to all scrapbookers. Why? Because heritage albums let you “know on a deeper level” and “leave something” to children “that can never be replaced.” Darlene and Claudette are suburban neighbors who share a “scrapbooking room” in Claudette’s house. Darlene has her own key so she can come and go as she pleases. Mostly, however, they work together, sitting opposite one another at a large table, flanked on one side by a shelf of materials and, on the other by a window that looks onto a large lawn. The room is just adjacent to the front door, opposite the dining room but far enough from the family room and the kitchen to give, like scrapbooks themselves, both privacy and access. Some of their completed scrapbooks line their living-room shelves; others are given as gifts—especially the heritage ones. Some are duplicated, and each of these has varied accompanying decisions about provenance: Where should the originals reside, with the maker, or with the person most honored by the creation? They laugh when they say the word “provenance” to signify their adjustment or discomfort with this concept learned at “a weekend crop workshop.”

Between businesses, children, and husbands, Claudette and Darlene forge their identities as friends and record keepers. But what was the initial pull of making albums? Claudette began because she saw the work of Darlene. She said, “Darlene had these books and the books, the scrapbooks, made it possible for her to be friends with her own teenager. Imagine that…. I knew that my children would one day give me trouble. And I saw this as a way to ward off that trouble. So I began.”

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Documents and friendship mediate the world for them, especially their work as mothers. The materials they collect, Darlene says, the stickers, tapes, papers, colored pins, well, “they are there,” but what is foremost is that the boundaries of their lives are set around information about their families and around the processes of collecting and saving this information. She calls this, “the benefits of it all, the total package,” but when asked what that means the answer she tells has something of the oral culture needed to tell of the past, the culture introduced when Joseph in the first chapter tells of a black and white photo but talks of the redheaded sister. Darlene points first to the room, itself, next to Claudette’s house, next in another direction, calling it, “all those other things to learn,” then in another direction, “to learn it from friends or with friends, to learn to shape my family life from them is one of the great blessings. I don’t think many people get that in modern life.” She is a “little suspicious” of what society does offer: “so many experts on everything. It’s confusing.” So, Darlene and Claudette have come to view one another and other scrapbookers as experts, and to view collecting, thinking about, and displaying records as part of their way of handling anxiety.

This accommodation to their own expertise, and this orality necessary to explain their worlds are quickly established, and thus all the more appealing. As Celia (b. 1962) noted:

I always tell my girls [by this she means the women who buy scrapbooks and supplies from her] when they come to a crop for the first time, I said, “Don’t be nervous about coming into a group of people you don’t know.” Because I say, “By the time you leave you’re going to have lifelong friends.” It’s true. It really is true because with that common bond, of making the albums, they do.

Nineteen other interviewees recalled beginning album making because of the friendships this hobby brought. Ten mentioned seeing role models in other scrapbookers
as the most important reason they began. One model they might see is found in someone like Marcella (b. 1947) who began making albums fifteen years ago because she wanted to “shape my life.” Her place of work is in a converted garage, created to hold a table bigger than the two desks of Claudette and Darlene, “larger than a ping pong table,” she says, “the size exactly of four doors lined up side by side.” Underneath are filing cabinets. Three walls of shelving make up more space for papers, files, and tools, and of course, “photographs, and other bits of memories.” Marcella works full-time as a professional but she is also a scrapbook vendor, a consultant. She devotes about three months a year to scrapbook making, selling, and teaching. She also rents a vacation home where consultants, customers, and friends overlap in categories. The bonds of the group are set “around the materials and what they can do for you.” These people help with the rent of this holiday/work space at the beach. She can deduct the expense of the workshops and rent from her taxes. Most of all though, Marcella says, they:

learn from one another. It is not a competitive thing. Rarely is. It is a way of putting some distance on both sadness and happiness in lives. You are putting them on a page and around you are these other women just working with stuff like you are working with. It is all there, in a way, say a divorce or hah, a flooded house. Someone has given you duplicates of the photos you lost in either one of these, but let’s say Katrina. Beside you is someone whose father has died. They are making a record of these things. People are talking about, say recipes, or tanning products. But there is a sense that you work there, you sort all the bad stuff too. Quietly. It makes it manageable, you know. That is what it did for me. Does for me.

Their work then is not only about collecting and displaying materials but also about interpreting these materials. This interpretation goes on within a community, and allows connections to various different communities, past and present, family history and scrapbooking.
Reasons for Continuing on with Heritage Albums

Like Marcella, others also see making albums as a way to achieve this interpretation, to make the past manageable, to “sort” the past. Overall the creation of heritage albums is important to interviewees for three primary reasons. First, these women and one man saw making albums about ancestors as a creative outlet. Second, they believed that their albums will preserve some physical manifestations of the past for later generations. Third, they thought of albums as a way to know and understand (genetically, geographically, and philosophically) the past and the present. All these reasons address connections between various temporal and spatial dimensions, which the scrapbook vendor Creative Memories prefaces in all its publicity as a belief in “the importance of preserving the past, enriching the present, and inspiring hope for the future.”

To Have Some Creative Outlet

A number of interviewees recognized that they wanted more chances for creativity and that album making offered this chance. Heritage albums required imagination in both finding materials and in “thinking about it and how it should reflect what you want.” For Isabelle, they are “books of me. That’s because … I do them really to enjoy their making, their creation, for today, for me.” She has taken the family tree made by a cousin, added stories of an ancestor who was given permission to leave Russia by the czar, and used photocopies of marriage and death records to tell her family story. As she was gathering materials, she thought about “how their lives were shaped, the type of clothes, and the day-to-day food, and I got to tackle how to make this look on a page.” Similarly, the

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owner of a scrapbook store spoke also of the rewards of imagining lives lived long ago:

“It is about placement of things on paper and using the mind and it requires some thought.”

Nineteen of the interviewees spoke of the paper choices, collages, stickers, pens, pencils, stamps, paper cutters, and other art tools. Work with these materials was “addictive.” Especially for two, both born in the late 1970s, the available materials afforded the chance to work deeply with various versions of the past, set within one page, to again, “contain,” that is, to both place and order what they considered “mixed messages” or “those things you don’t quite know how it all fits.”

Seven of the interviewees spoke of themselves as “artsy,” but ten spoke of themselves as “craftsy” and nine, as “not too craftsy.” Twenty had done some other sort of craft-work (quilting, knitting, decoupage, furniture repair) but these hobbies “take up more room.” Only two spoke of album making as related to graphic design. Yet, all but the one man emphasized visual aspects of albums, even those who prefaced remarks by warning that their pages were “simple,” and by noting how they had to try not to worry over “how other albums looked.”

To Make a Lasting Book

Other crafts, the album makers feel, will not last. Scrapbooks, on the other hand, will. “In the future, they [who receive the book] will have memories, where other crafts—you hang it on the wall, it outdates, you throw it away; where this album is something they’ll have forever, to appreciate and look back on.”
Scrapbook consultants, and the many books and websites on scrapbooking, speak extensively of standards of paper and hazards of light and temperature.\(^7\) Preservation is the most emphasized function within the network of these people, materials, and technology. Heritage albums “should be,” as interviewee Jane (b. 1955) even “more than other scrapbooks, a safe book.” By this she means, “archivally safe.” She next discusses Creative Memories’ online dictionary that lists standards and provides a conservation calculator that can be downloaded.\(^8\)

To many interviewees, preservation is handled by buying the products. Preservation becomes something emotional, something symbolic. As Beth (b. 1979) noted, she valued her heritage album since it was a form where—not only I could look at it, [but also] they could look at it, their grandchildren and their grandchildren can look at it. And just have an idea of—Not only what they did, but how they did it and why they did it and when. And the story as well—that’s preserved for them in the future.

Over half the interviewees talked of what had \textit{not} been preserved for them, that is, the lack of information available, and they spoke of this lack as a motivator. Cheryl (b. 1961) talked of being given a family scrapbook by someone at a family reunion, a scrapbook that had no names written under the photographs, and no information about the compiler. She recounted:

This was a beautiful book, crumpling but beautiful and over seventy-years old itself. But nothing was written down; I couldn’t tell even that it was about … our family. Now [the maker’s] daughter, who was then 92, the only thing she could identify was herself and her mother, sometimes. So I said, “My children will never be like that.”

To Know the Past

For some, such albums allow learning not only for future generations but also for oneself. Marcella stated that she knew nothing of her family beyond her great-grandparents and their migration to the U.S. from Italy. “In gathering things for a heritage album, you … are also filling in all these gaps in your own life.”

How would this help? “In general, it broadens you. Later I found out that some of these Italians had even fought in the Civil War. I understood the Civil War differently.” As Isabelle noted, “I think I always wanted to know how things, tangible things, shaped people’s lives or stood for things in people’s lives and now I do know more about that.”

Patricia (b. 1965) described knowledge of the past as informing her friend about herself, of providing self knowledge:

In her family, her immediate family, she didn’t really look like anybody else. She didn’t really act like anybody else. And she always would, you know, “Am I adopted?” And they would say “No, you’re not.” She never knew where she really fit in, until her grandmother died and when they looked through her house, they found some photos. And they had a photo of her great-grandmother who looked exactly like her. So she began to make a heritage album, around this great-grandmother. And she wrote stories of what she found; she had letters they found that she read and everything. She’s like, “This is me!” You know, and she finally—like—she was part of the family.

Two album makers recalled workshops where they learned “how ancestors could inspire,” or “could teach, learning about them can teach about life today.” What is unknown from documents, for Cheryl, taught something too. She has a clipping showing a photograph of her great-grandfather. He had lived to be 106 and the newspapers printed an article on him. She links his place of honor with this record but she also imagines his wife:
That’s our prized ancestor because I have a visual piece on him. But in some ways, I’m more interested in his wife because she had 13 children and they all lived. All the children! The more we, my dad and I, have studied the mortality rate in that area, specifically that county, that someone kept records of … and [from those records, I see] it’s phenomenal that these thirteen children would all live. She must have been a very conscientious mother and they must have had enough food and education and oh, all sorts of things that I will never be able to document. But she did something right that I am here now.

For Cheryl, an African American, family history was “always important,” and this importance, if not the actual memories of cousins, was known. Why?

Because, after slavery, all but two of the thirteen children moved away from the South. But you know they had family reunions. They had them every year. I have a record of that in these scrapbooks they had. So I will just do a little better than they did in leaving a record in these albums, but they set the tone.

Heritage album making then is a process that involves “expanding your horizon a little,” “putting names to faces,” and “being part of something bigger than one little self in the world.” As Darlene mentioned:

I helped my husband to understand … his mother’s side [of the family]. I found out that there were even more things that we’ll probably never find out just because of her early childhood. Her father was gone and her mother ended up leaving too and she was raised by his grandmother…. From digging you definitely find out more.

She had been able to “dig” through online sources (the Library of Congress, National Archives, Social Security Death Index, and “Cyndi’s List”). Asked how she had learned these sources, she replied, “It is something I overheard at a crop session.”

Eugenie (b. 1970) also used such sources in making a heritage album for her mother, but she thought of the album, rather than the sources, as facilitating self-knowledge. “It was being able to present it all together,” that was important. About her mother, she stated,
I had the few pictures that she had of her parents that she gave me and then I went and found city directory information on them and went and found some orphanage records, and a court case. All these when I put them together gave her a glimpse into what their life was like, prior to ever raising her. Her childhood had been horrible. He drank, the father, her father, my grandfather, and deserted the family eventually. And the book, now, she said, it gives her an understanding of why they were the way they were. I think that so many times we’re quick to blame the way we are on our past or whatever. But this is not like that, this is thinking about them as people. And my mother’s father was so poor at one time, I mean, he was eating out of garbage cans, as far as I could tell, he lost everything. Well, that helped her understand why he was abusive … because he was bitter and it didn’t excuse his behavior, but it helped her have a glimpse into why, you know, what made him.

The creativity and the preservation of a family’s history were also valued on a practical level by Sally (b. 1955):

because I’ve actually helped people in the family with the genetic stuff. And just last year, my dad got sick. They couldn’t find out why…. I took in the scrapbook to his doctor. I said four people in his family died of appendicitis. I said, check his appendix…. And they checked and it was. I could have been wrong but I was glad I had the album.

Knowledge of the past and the self within the past remain one of the most important motivations of album makers. As Charlotte (b. 1943) said, “It’s just awesome I think to know and help you remember what came before you and so you can know where you’ve been has some reason behind it.” Francesca similarly remarked: “It kind of moves you forward to the next thing … kind of gives you that immortality, so to speak, with your family.”

*To Connect To Others*

The interviewees believe that albums allow a connection with the past by gathering materials and learning what the materials represent. At the same time, making albums allows connections to other scrapbookers and the immediate family in the present. Finally
there is the focus on the legacies for future generations. Twenty-two mentioned “connections,” or “connecting.”

The storms and flooding of the 2005 hurricane season meant even more reasons to consider parallels with the past. Loss and potential loss were understood as times to look for records in libraries and archives. In her Katrina evacuation to Texas, one album maker was reminded that her mother had been a teenager in hurricane Betsy. The family lost “family photos, school records, marriage certificates, all the old things” in that 1965 storm:

They didn’t have photos of where they lived ever again. It was too frightening that everything could be lost…. My mother talks about it constantly. So I got some images from the library and from relatives and made her an album to stand in for the places lost. This was during our own evacuation and I wanted the kids to get it that life went on.

Processes

Although using the images from the library required “research,” most album makers call their work “creating.” All but four prefer using materials gathered in the family. Considered in stages that usually overlap one another, album makers concentrate on finding the type of binder and “look” of an album they wish to use, laying out the images and records to represent the past and the present on different pages, working with various layouts until they are satisfied. The use of digital photographs, especially of artifacts, and scanned records are considered as they go along.

*Finding the Perfect Album*

Isabelle offered one example of the primacy of form, its ability to act as a solution. During a time of stress in her life, she felt inundated by paper. On her way home one day, she thought about “albums that I had also inherited and one I was given, for my wedding
… it was a strap hinge … it laid flat. Every page laid flat, from the first page to the last.”

She found the company that sold this type of album. “That thought,” Isabelle recalled, “it changed life. I just was like, ‘Oh my God, this is what I’ve been looking for.’ I could reshape this paper problem of mine. I could do something different.” Another scrapbook consultant, Jane, had a similar epiphany. Finding an album that suited her, and that had “archival qualities … it was like a light bulb went on in my head.”

Both of these interviewees are referring to the Holes Webway album discussed in Chapter Three, but another type of album was also mentioned in the interviews. As Mignon (b. 1964) noted:

I will never use an album where once you’ve put it in the order it’s got to stay in that order and you’ve got to redo everything. I love the beauty of those albums cause, that blue one there, as it got bigger, I broke it into two volumes. So as we get more stories, I add them to them. I try to be more diligent of saying who the relationship was of who we got the interview from. I still have probably three or four full cassettes of interviews that I need to transcribe. I’ve got a whole tablet full of notes, so yeah, they’re never done. Cause then as a person dies, then we end up getting their stuff and finding, adding more to the stories that we already have. So they’re always a work in progress.

Describing the Heritage Album

Once the album is in hand, heritage album makers are instructed to begin asking questions of family members about where ancestors lived, what they did on a daily basis, what was important to them. Next to be sought from relatives are information on birthdays, school records, marriage certificates, and causes of death. In other words, the oral tradition of family stories comes first or is most prized among album makers.
Records themselves follow. Publications on scrapbooking suggest ways to display these stages of research, but most often friends at gatherings help one another.

For these albums, album makers are advised to choose dark colored paper to emulate nineteenth-century albums. They are told to write in gold or white ink. They are told to include minimal decoration, to concentrate on information. “Decorative touches should be minimal in a legacy album as they distract from the main items and may fall apart over time.” All the heritage albums shown to me followed this advice.

Using Technology

All but one of the heritage album makers discussed how their work would not be possible without digital photography, scanning, and photocopying. Technology extends the performative aspect of remembering, making possible and desirable these processes involved in making a heritage album. While an example of an ancestor’s handwriting trumps his or her photograph in what interviewees most valued in their albums, they are very conscious of their learning about and use of advanced technology. In a typical month, there are usually at least two opportunities to take workshops (online and/or in consultant’s homes) on digital photography and scanning. Digital photography is the premier technology among these efforts, closely followed by photocopying and scanning. Album makers are also heavy users of scrapbooking websites. Five mentioned online

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11 Eric Ketelaar, “Being Digital in People’s Archives,” Archives and Manuscripts 31, no. 2 (November 2003): 8–22, available at http://cf.hum.uva.nl/bai/home/eketelaar/Beingdigital.doc; van Dijck, Mediated Memories, 169. Among album makers, the software from Creative Memories (Memory Manager and Story Book) was most often mentioned. Even Microsoft Word comes packaged with a template for completing a heritage album.
scrapbooks, and fourteen mentioned digitally created scrapbooks. They also have knowledge of various memory banks where photos can be stored commercially, and sixteen of the interviewees mentioned external hard drives. Marcella recognized the growth too of the digital age, and its advantages for album makers:

Electronically created scrapbooks, these save time and money…. We all know that people are not printing out all their photos, but what Creative Memories has done is to begin teaching not only how to save photos to external hard drives but also to work with one’s really good pictures.

On the other hand, seventeen of the interviewees mentioned problems managing the quantity of digital photographs, even given special Creative Memories software to do so. Nine were also aware of the fragility of digital photographs and thus the need to make albums of “the best pictures,” as one said.

Overall, though, technology is the great enabler of all they do and they are proud of their use and creation of memory products. That they become experts on technology is another empowerment of album making, one that they see “as helping us as women.” Why so? Women do not usually have “skills around computers and now we do.”

Influences: Gender and Migration

How is the influence of gender roles felt in other ways? As noted in Chapter Three, the scrapbook vendors, especially Creative Memories, have walked a fine line between religion, politics, and traditional gender roles now for twenty-one years by emphasizing self-esteem. This message was articulated in fifteen of the interviews. But their words were more vague than the national literature on scrapbooking. In the Alabama and Louisiana groups, the evangelical nature gets poured into beliefs about women’s
particular adeptness at “holding families together through memory.” Understanding migration through album making also is considered in terms of family cohesiveness.

**Gender**

As mentioned earlier, although one man was interviewed, 98 percent of album makers nationwide are women. One hundred percent of those people attending cropping sessions or retreats in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast were women. All of the twenty-six interviewees believed that women more than men were likely to keep family history, in general.

Gender-segregation is acknowledged, defended, and “celebrated.” As one said, “Like men play with balls, grown men, we play too but with something that will last.” In some ways, this takes on the image they have of themselves as average but industrious people. In other ways, their ways of speaking show a certain childish quality. For the most part, they have not taken up the habit of calling themselves women. One forty-year old spoke of a “scrapping cottage” that she intends to have soon:

We have a little house two doors down that my father and mother gave us and eventually we’re hoping to make that our scrapbooking place. We’ll call it a little scrapping cottage, and a bunch of girls will sit down there and play, and scrapbook a few times a month, and make a little club.

In crop sessions, women value that they can incorporate an acceptable way to be away from family while simultaneously taking family as the subjects of their albums. Crop sessions can include as few as four and as many as 300 women. Some of the larger events include long weekends together in hotels where scrapbooking activities are

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supplemented by “massages, pedicures, book groups, cooking lessons.” Album makers see these efforts as broadening their roles in life, not restricting them. As one said, “At the crops and retreats, oh my Lord, everybody comes from different walks of life, you know, it’s not--We’re not the same in any way, economically, socially, culturally. So it’s interesting…. I meet people; I hear stories I would have never heard.”

Mothers with young children especially value album making since it can be home-based. As in the tidiness of their homes, album makers in general consider homemaking as part of a moral imperative concerned with mothering, family cohesiveness, and sharing.\textsuperscript{13}

Technology makes this haven one that can accommodate images of the past, in old or new forms. The message is that finding ancestors is one way to tie the family together through objects and through technology.\textsuperscript{14} Album makers reinterpret both the place of women and the place of making memory texts in response to market forces, especially the availability of goods (foremost, albums themselves, but also electronic access to the past), and social forces, such as migration, thoughts on women as the primary caregivers of children, and an ethnically diverse community.\textsuperscript{15}


Financial rewards make scrapbooking a more viable alternative than other direct sales experiences dominated by women. As Eugenie stated:

With the jewelry, I had some problems with people having a return or whatever, so I was having to send it back. And I was feeling like I was not representing a company that I was comfortable doing. Tupperware has been around forever, it’s a wonderful product. However, once people buy that bowl from you, they don’t have a re-occurring need--for me, as the consultant. The difference with this [Creative Memories] is I’m teaching them something, number one, that is valuable, life-wise. But at the same time, as they work they’re going to consume their products and need more, and want to learn new ideas. So that’s been-- the residual sales is what keeps you going as far as sales-wise.

According to Marcella, “It is the quilting bee gone to science fiction.”

Simon, on the other hand, does not want to participate in a group. He has not been given the opportunity to even buy their products. “I don’t know if I want to learn digital scrapbooking and I certainly wouldn’t feel comfortable telling about my albums to strange women.” Isabelle has one male customer; Marcella two, but the others had no male customers. Men work in the four scrapbook stores in Alabama and Louisiana, but no men ever came into the shops during seven visits there during 2006 to 2009.

In some ways men are privileged within the albums themselves. The Q and A section of Lasting Memories in 2007 featured this question:

In genealogy etiquette, should the paternal ancestor be displayed first in a scrapbook album? The answer: There’s no hard and fast rule, according to Marcia Yannizze Melnyk, author of The Weekend Genealogist and Family History 101. When using separate pages, she usually puts the paternal first. On a two page spread, she puts the man on the left page with his family photos and the women on the right hand page with hers.

Why? “This seems to work the best.”16

But how did this play out in the albums in Louisiana and Alabama? Ten of the fifty-two heritage albums shown to me featured women ancestors as the “main character.” Thirty-two featured both men and women ancestors, but began with the male. The others were created around specific subjects: the military (which for the most part meant male ancestors), a christening gown (male and female babies, but a tradition mediated by women), dolls (also mediated by girls and women), houses (of interest to both males and females), and holidays (usually more female-dominated preparations for celebrations, but football games too were included here).

Migration

Migration is similarly muted but ever present in the conversations and advice of album makers. The prescriptive literature tells that “Your heritage can be as simple as the past 15 years or as complex as the past 150 years. Your heritage is really about your background and traditions.” However, this advice also assumes that families have migrated. Among the first questions album makers are encouraged to ask of their elders, are “Where did you grow up? Who [in your family] lived near you?” An alternate form of memoir, one that does not require attention to straight narrative, the heritage album “lets these people, this family that was separated, come back together,” according to Marcella.

In this reunion, there is again the metanarrative of migration and sacrifice. As Francesca noted:

Making the heritage album makes us look back, and say, this is what the family did; this is what we’ve accomplished. Because, as I really believe, there is so little time for really leaving a record, people don’t think they’re important enough

17 Album Tutor.
either to think what they did counted. I don’t think, often at the end of the day; the kids, work, house, did I do anything? But if you have this album, you remember, others did the same before you. They worked, so you are a little farther along in this world. It’s nice to see what people have done to get you to the point that you are now.

Migration is also a more immediate concern. As another said,

I want the kids to know who Aunt Blanche is. But they’re never going to know who Aunt Blanche is. I mean, we’re lucky if we get to see her once every ten years. And that wasn’t the case, I think, fifty years ago. You grew up with extended family everywhere. So I think it [making albums] brings that tie together. I think it’s really important.

Fellow scrapbookers can come also to reconstitute roles once confined to the family. As Darlene noted about the hobby itself, “You get so many women … who are working now, and families spread out all over the country. So it recreates … [a] place where there are people like you and people not like you, but you know them all.”

On the other hand, the history of the U.S. itself, especially migration, presents problems to some album makers. As Isabelle noted:

In my eight years as a creative memories consultant, I have found, you would be surprised, how few people are doing albums on heritage and one of the reasons is it’s so overwhelming. People moved so much! And then to find where they moved and what they did, well that is a lot to do.

For Francesca, the family had immigrated to the U.S. during her mother’s childhood. They were quickly assimilated, and part of this assimilation was fitting in and forgetting.

They want to know why I think it is so important to remember. Their children, my generation and my children, we are taught some of the dances and some of the cooking, but we are not told the stories. And when I ask, I can only go so far before one of them says, “Why are you asking?”
For others with much longer histories in the U.S., making such an album is also sometimes perceived as upsetting American beliefs in the melting pot, a place free of prejudice. Sally remembers family members’ embarrassment with their Irish heritage. There was this feeling that if anything was bad, it was because they were Irish. No matter there was German and French mixed in there, every bad thing that happened, and what doesn’t happen in all families that has some bad? No matter; it was because they were Irish.

Interpreting the Work of Album Makers

The creation of heritage albums shows the circulation of private records, especially as they move seemingly slowly, prosaically to a more public realm. Shared in the crop session and online, they pass outside the family. In an era where technological capabilities make memory traces ever more prevalent, the transmission of records and their use in collective memory formation becomes all the more prominent.

Transmission

At present, album makers have recast the eighteenth-century form of a “scrapbook genealogy” such as can be found at the New England Historic Genealogical Society. Making such albums has given more women a more visible role than ever as record keepers, a role usually relegated to stay in the background, to keep memory, but keep it tightly among themselves and let others, especially more powerful men, carry it into the world.

In terms of transmission, there is an emphasis above all in “getting the names down,” and for the living family, getting these names in handwriting since that will “tell more to those who come after,” and “showing these albums to the family.” The centrality of future transmission of the personal, not the emphasis on proof in the examples of the

19 Salls, “Scrapbook Genealogies,” 56–57
family historians, can be seen as part of the overall heritage movement with its focus on “the present-mindedness” of the past and a “worship of memory” without reflection or basis in history.\(^\text{20}\)

Yet to album makers their own subjectivity is the goal. For them objectivity and subjectivity are not polarizing characteristics. Rather, they aim for an interpreted meaning, an unabashed “here are the memories available to me and so here is how I interpret them.” This response is akin to family historians in their search for meaning noted by Yakel and Torres.\(^\text{21}\) But more overtly than family historians, album makers maintain and display an emphasis on private records and private versions.

In some ways they take on the view that their albums, like the family photographs studied by Marianne Hirsch, are “composite, heterogeneous media, ‘imagetexts’: visual texts that is, whose readings are narrative and contextual but which also, in some ways resist and circumvent narration.”\(^\text{22}\) The album makers work with this composite make-up but they also see their role as working against this resistance, the dead-end that any photo without narration would have.

Cyndi’s List, that massive referral page to all things genealogy, lists some sixty websites from its main page on scrapbooking.\(^\text{23}\) All these pages in one fashion or another concern the transmission of family records from one album maker to someone else. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is one scrapbooking site listed with Cyndi. By following links one can get answers from NARA to the following questions: How do I preserve my family papers? How can I safely mount my documents,

\(^{20}\) Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*, x–xi.
\(^{21}\) Yakel and Torres, “Genealogists as a ‘Community of Records,’” 108.
\(^{22}\) Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 271n2.
\(^{23}\) Howells, Cyndi’s List of Genealogical Sites on the Internet, “Scrapbooks.”
memorabilia, and photographs into albums or scrapbooks? Should I remove my photographs from old albums, such as black paper albums or self-stick albums? How should I caption my photographic prints; is there a safe way to write on the back of photographs? How should I frame and display my photographs? How should I store my photographic prints? How can I get some important documents that I own repaired? Should I digitize my photo collection? Is it safe to throw away my original film and prints after I digitize them?

But from Cyndi’s, one can also visit many other sites, equally weighted here as experts: commercial scrapbooking vendors, the Mormon’s Ancestry.com website, digital scrapbook vendors, and personal websites. The focus is on creating something from and for family memory.

This family memory moves into multiple realms. Although American Studies scholars of the Victorian era have looked to the parlor as the home of the then new photograph album, the interviewees in 2006, 2007, and 2008 live in an age in which technology allows the creation of a much expanded space of memory. “The beauty of the Story Book [the digitally created scrapbook] is that you can have multiple copies, so you really can do the heritage albums for the whole family, the same book.” None of the interviewees had worked with online scrapbooks, but ten were followers of such books. “Especially the ones about breast cancer,” said one. “You can follow their feelings and their treatment; it is like a television show.”

Such topics address the other difficulties that heritage albums bring. Transmission is considered a task of women, “to make sure the children get these memories,” but

24 Vosmeier, “Picturing Love and Friendship,” 207–218; Siegel, “‘Miss Domestic’ and ‘Miss Enterprise,’” 251–267.
memories themselves, recontextualized within albums are not without problems that come from knowledge of the larger society, and even of the widening circles of who will see the album. As the interviewees see it, there should be a positive frame. As one stated, “Well, you do want to add the happier memories, not the sad ones. That’s just human nature.” But how does one put an optimistic lens on societal and personal problems? As Anna stated about her heritage as a white woman:

Well going way back, we, there’s a bust down there in the museum down in the French Quarter and offhand I can’t think of his name … my great-great-grandfather’s cousin, his records. And he was a very wealthy man here in the city and come to find out he did have Negro blood in him. And, uh yet, my grandfather was the proudest Frenchman that you could ever meet and fair, fair, fair [in color], but he did find out that he was a distant relative of this man. And another of his relatives was tied in some way to the nuns, the black nuns [sisters of the Holy Family, an order founded by a woman who refused to become part of the system in which octoroons were taken as the mistresses of white men]. And this nun, she’s right now up for sainthood, Henriette Delille, well anyway, we are related to her. And if you know why there are family secrets about this, well, then you have to think how your ancestors felt and acted. And you sometimes don’t know what to think.

Difficulties for album makers were not only those of thoughts and feelings. Commenting on the segregation of the U.S., an African-American album maker, Cheryl noted some of the problems she had in attempting to find records for her albums:

But there’s a story. I am trying to find a family Bible, of the white family. So, you see, this is something that makes it difficult: they’re afraid. …I’m registered on Rootsweb and I worded it specifically so you don’t know what race I am, but that I’m interested in information on such and such. Someone did contact me from California. And I said oh I actually have some information on your people, can we exchange information? So I packaged everything up and sent what I had and I said well in return when you go visit that area, could you look for this for me? And that’s kind of where I guess, when she—I knew that was going to happen, that when she got to Virginia she would find out that I was black, and wouldn’t give me the information. Sure enough that’s what happened.
How did she deal with this problem? She left a blank space to signify what could come one day. She also wrote the story of the Bible, describing her difficulty in locating it. She recontextualized the overall process of finding records, and the overall continuing problems of the legacies of slavery.

In other respects, too album makers’ experiences with the inaccessibility of records demonstrate potential problems with transmission of records. As Grace notes of her search for archival documents:

I would call the Halls of Records. They will send you marriage licenses and things but they are not a copy of the actual one. They are just like a form. I wanted something authentic to put in the book so I would have to call them, “Could you pull this and make a copy?” Most times they will but they charge you a lot of money and they take forever. “We’ll put you on the list.” And three months later you’ll get it in the mail. And it is not the form. It is just the content of the form. I have seen birth certificates and they... Archival theory teaches that “non-electronic records are kept as authentic records by maintaining them in the same form and state of transmission in which they were when made or received and set aside.”25 Here it is the researcher who has noticed what has changed in the migration to a new medium, a new representation of the past.

A certain look is desired in other ways as well that concerns context, content, and form. For some it is the look of family, an “affiliative look”26 one might say. The family must look like the family. A record must look like a record.

Despite these problems, the interviewees still repeat many of the sayings of the scrapbooking world in general that memory should be interwoven with daily life, pictured in albums that speak to the present, even if the memories are harsh. This is the

26 Hirsch, Family Frames, 254.
most prominent aspect of their recontextualization, and is no different than any other sort of memorialization in speaking to the present. So Francesca puts the family tree by the sonogram for each of her children, in the first album made for each child. So Patricia makes a heritage album around a christening gown, adding the family tree and showing on the branches and leaves who had worn the gown. Subsequent pages featured church records and photographs of the baptisms. So Simon adds family history pages to many of his more than 140 albums, especially in children’s albums joining, for example, images of a child’s judo lessons with photos of his father’s fencing lessons in the early twentieth century; his daughter’s college graduation with that of her great-grandmother; and a horseback riding camp of his grandson with his great-grandfather’s barn on a plantation. But so too is Sally’s placement of an obituary of someone who committed suicide. Because she can frame this memory, add her own comment or leave a blank space, recontextualization is at the core her album making, and for others too, the core, often of their daily thoughts on album making.

Pluralization

All the album makers used the making of heritage albums as means for memories to extend outward into the future, and often, into other types of environments (farther away, the homes of their descendants, and nearby, the crop sessions of next month.) In their thinking, however, they did not necessarily ponder over their part in a public memory outside family or scrapbooking circles. Only one had considered donating their albums or any records to a library or archives. Both upper-middle-class albums makers—Francesca and Simon—had materials any archives would want, and knew this to be the case. They discussed the papers of their celebrated relatives, and the importance of these papers to
the larger society, but the albums themselves they considered “too private” to go to an archives or a library. Simon’s wife had donated her scrapbooks of camp and school life to an archives, but he, with considerable emotion, said, “They are for my children.” He offered an example of how he is still validated by the scrapbooks his mother kept on the family, still maintained in his den, a more masculine word but a room very like Anna’s memory room.

Yet at crop sessions and workshops, as noted above, it was the diversity of people they valued, the knowledge of other people’s families. So they lived a more pluralized life but they did not necessarily move records or memories into collective memory. Pluralization in the archival sense is not yet a part of their processes of learning the past.

Or is it precisely so because they create both lived and archival memories? One of their most common comments concerned how little is actually known of the past, and how their work supplements what can be known. Over and over, they repeated this statement of “how little is known.” For some this is a problem of migration. As Laura (b. 1970) stated: “The thing that bothered me the most is some of these people we’re looking at, they’re deceased, and I wasn’t able to do them justice.”

Or, as Crystal (b. 1962) stated,

It’s really frustrating when you just have so little about this person. This person lived this life and left behind children and grandchildren and I have three facts. That’s very, very frustrating to me. I try to find out as much as I can. You know, talk to everybody, call old neighbors, friends, anything I can find out. I just—that’s my worst fear—is--this person lived a whole life, [and] I have three things to say.

What can she do with this fear? “Make albums for my children.”

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Their children, they believe, will carry forth a broadened access to family history. The tools of their mother’s rooms and spaces are opened to the children at a certain age. They learn album making. The children also have many more resources available to them to carry forth records and recontextualized records than their mothers have. As Lynette (b. 1967) stated:

My daughter … She doesn’t want to do the crafty pasting, gluing, but she’ll say, “Mom, what do you want to do? What do you want to write? How do you want to put it?” Or she will say, “I’ll go on the computer, I’ll print out what I can find and bring it to you.” She likes history. So I have a little assistant. Yeah, she’s really big on history, so she’s interested and, she’s even looked up clothes. Trying to date them as clues. Because we have beautiful pictures of her great-grandmother in ball gowns, Mardi Gras ball gowns, and that started a whole, “What ball was this?” and “Where did the dress come from?”

In addition, scrapbooking in general is thought of as a hobby that reaches out to other people. Asked why she no longer quilted, Jane said, “I had to make a choice. So I thought, well, scrapbooking is going to reach more people.” Here again is the connecting function, the roles Bourdieu located in women’s roles in sharing photographs. 28

The association extends to the future. As Grace noted, “When I leave the world, there’s going to be a piece of me somewhere. Don’t know why or who will have them or what they’ll think of them, but the piece of me will be there.”

The Middle Point

Grace, like other album makers, comes from a background that emphasized connections between places, stories, families, traditions, and some creativity. Leisure, economics, generations of gender segregation and migrations shape memory work for her and other album makers. The collective memories of their friends and families are shaped by these album makers. Will these trends continue? Even in an economic downturn, it

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seems likely that they may, albeit in some abbreviated form. Although in late 2008, Creative Memories’ refinancing and Chapter 11 bankruptcy\(^\text{29}\) show how vulnerable the direct sales business can be, the last crop sessions of 2008 also showed an even greater reliance on an exchange of goods based upon in-kind services or products, a determination to beat the system this way.

The plurality found in other women, and some sense of records extending into the future (some archival pluralization) enlivens the work of these album makers. The interviewees speak of living, moving, acting not just from the safe place of the album, or, for most of them, from the safe place where women are gathered together and tell of their lives, but also towards understanding “a bigger picture.” They pride themselves on the growing knowledge of families, technology, and of themselves made possible by album making.

Yamilee’s quote at the beginning of this chapter speaks to the capacity for a private memory text to cross into the public realm, and to extend understanding of public and private records. She asks somewhat obliquely, “If you were a book title or a movie title, what would that title be?” In other words, how would you place yourself, in just a few words, according to some public shorthand known to others?

Founding partners of Creative Memories, Cheryl Lightle and Rhonda Anderson, market themselves as adept at such shorthand, but nevertheless want a sort of gravitas to be present within memory products.

Although *scrapbooking* is the term generally applied to the work promoted by album companies … we prefer to use the terms *album making* as much as possible. The reason is that scrapbooking is viewed as a hobby or a craft, while making keepsake albums is about building connections, enriching our lives, and leaving a lasting family legacy.  

Their movement has been wildly successful but the vernacular term “scrapbooking” remains. The heritage albums have come to represent a special, even a rarified place because they are more difficult, needful of learning context and content. They are, like other hybrids studied by Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Sacacino Zboray, “boundary-blurring forms.” As Francesca herself at the beginning of this chapter noted, heritage albums are situated between family history and scrapbooking.

This middle point offers advantages, as Virginia Woolf argued for other women outsiders. They can reveal those acts that to others are seamlessly a part of culture. What the album makers illuminate is the fact that archival records, until the Internet, were completely out of the range of most women interested in tending memory (and most men as well).

Outsiders always bring a different view, in this case, album makers enlarge the parameters of a public history—outside academia, but also outside those usual purveyors of information. “The press, the history books, the television talk show hosts” shape “what people think they know,” said Isabelle. From her alternative perspective and those of other album makers are created records that balance against or supplement this other world.

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Yet, with technological interfaces, album makers begin to use resources of libraries and archives, and now have quickly taken up digital scanning and photography. The task for archivists is to know these people and their use and creation of records. Album makers offer a remarkable gateway to understanding private archives and various interfaces with public archives that will be possible in the future. The vocabulary itself must be understood. What the archival profession calls recontextualization and pluralization of records, album makers define as “their legacy” carried forward, something discussed further in the two final chapters.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRANSMISSION AND PLURALIZATION OF FAMILY MEMORIES

I can provide information concerning the Pecot family, which originated in Les Touches, a village in what is now the province of Loire-Atlantique, France, and ultimately arrived in Louisiana. I’ve researched the family for several years now; I have the information for the 1800s back … would like to meet other Pecots, however, and find out where the family has scattered!

From a posting to Genealogy Forum

The New W[estern] A[ustrali]an Maritime Museum highlights the maritime traditions and cultures, not just of Australia, but of all world nations involved in the history of this region. In 2002 Graeme Henderson, by then the Director of The New WA Maritime Museum, proudly hosted a celebratory symposium of the Stefano... There all delighted at the unveiling of the original votive painting, depicting Tuckey’s Jessie, and his boat being rowed towards the boys and their Aboriginal saviours on the shore at North West Cape. It had been escorted by Father Capuchin Nikola Novak, from the Church Our Lady of Mercy in Dubrovnik where it hung for well over a century in the Gallery of Capuchin Monastery—his presence and the picture a real highlight to those involved in modern Stefano story.

From an online article on the display of the barque Stefano

As other chapters have argued, the past is gathered and told in the practices of family history and album making through the transmission of records and oral accounts.

Yet, transmission is not a finite process. Rather, the activation of records (“interaction,

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intervention, interrogation and interpretation") leads to other representations, sometimes to collective memory (and often new records), to “pluralization.” This chapter looks to this formation by offering two examples that show the movement of records traversing time and space in a dynamic “of departure and return, emerging sameness and difference, repetition and recursion … distancing and differentiation.” In these examples, the chapter returns to a consideration of recordkeeping, which like memory itself is “social ... elective ... driven by various processes, both willful and unconscious … and provisional, always open to contestation, and often actually contested.” Suggested within the two excerpts above, the chapter also tells of various environments conducive to knowing private family histories, located continents apart from one another, now joined online, and thus becoming, more and more often, the most public of all history.

**Movement and Layering**

The public nature of history learned through family records can be placed within a “belief that history and historical-cultural memory matter in the way people go about their day-to-day lives.” In this respect, public history—as family history is—becomes an ideology that “promotes the collaborative study and practice of history” by people holding various positions (academic historians, museum curators, archivists, professional genealogists, serious hobbyists, and others). These people move traces of the past into the public realm, but their positions are layered (determined by their accreditation, their legitimacy in various circles) and their knowledge rests upon various standpoints.

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3 Ketelaar, “Archives as Spaces of Memory,” 12.
Accessibility to records, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, adds to these differing perspectives, which become another part of the movements and layering. At the same time, learning in such an environment itself pluralizes, as shown in Chapters Five and Six, adding further movement and other layers. Overall, this is a vibrant process precisely because of the unknowns, the new meanings, the pursuit of clues and patterns always set within any interpretations of records.

Despite this dynamic nature of referrals back and forth between records and people, the “shifting layers” present sometimes ambiguous and opposing representations of the past. In this respect, the layers complicate the work of family historians since they see the processes of memory as progressing linearly. This propensity might even be one of the reasons so many family historians do not bring to fruition their plans for completed projects. Their rules, drawn from a positivist tradition, discourage dealing with inconclusive records, the layers of not-yet-revealed sources, and the problem always of missing stories. Similarly, album makers persist in their collage-like creations (themselves layers) of many truths and outsider status, but do not see their work as being worthy of an archives or library. Their albums are unlike a history textbook in that they are subjective, and unlike published autobiographies and biographies in that they are hybrid forms of texts and images. Thus, albums and family history move more often than not to a semi-public rather than a public realm.

The idea that the past holds backward and forward movements, layers, and at the same time the limits of a certain linear thinking also is found in most scholarly discourse that reaches family historians and album makers. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich noted in her discussion of embroidered family trees, the creators of such artifacts saw a purpose in

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8 For a related argument, see Brien Brothman, “Archives, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes.”
their creations since here they could project “time stretching out beyond … a lifetime.”
This extension was predicated on learning to think about what has come before and what
will come after one has died. She draws the analogy of finding a note left by a child in the
wall of a house, a note that the child believes will be found one day.9 Here is a layer then
also of time, (the future orientation of the child) as well as a literal construction (of a
note, of a place within a wall, and a mind’s conception of the possibility of others tearing
down the wall). Memory itself is always so constructed.10 The point for family historians
and album makers is to find these layers that have moved forward in time, these records
that have persisted. There is again vibrancy here since, as Hannah Arendt famously
remarked, “To be alive means to live in a world that preceded one’s own arrival and will
survive one’s departure.”11

For archivists and others who study memory as well, vocabulary suggesting
movement and layers, as noted in Chapter Two, abounds in the midst of a dependency at
least on language suggesting a straightforward movement. As Brien Brothman has
eloquently shown, the life cycle model especially neglects the fact that beginning- and
end-points recur in record formation.12 Even in records continuum theory, there is “the
reach” of public and private records. Frank Upward used this term to show knowledge
and its circulation via publishing. Records similarly extend themselves via and towards
groups of people to represent the past. People and technologies mediate places and

10 Schudson, Watergate in American Memory, 219, 221.
12 Brothman, “Archives, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes,” especially 244–266.
objects that allow some remembering in common. All the while, a certain layering of
the past obscures records and requires different, less linear approaches to understanding
family history. The two examples that follow here show something of these less linear
circumstances.

A Succession of Knowing

To say today the word *Acadian* one chooses between multiple understandings of
eyear French colonial residents of what are now the Maritime Provinces of Canada, their
descendants still there and elsewhere, especially the residents of the southern Louisiana
parishes where many of these French-speaking Canadians (now often called “Cajuns”) setled after the 1750s. These three meanings circle around the activities of many family
historians and album makers today, conveying especially distinctive food, music,
language, accents, and names, as well as interest in particular records.

One place this living collective memory is self-consciously located is the Acadian
World Congress, or *Le Congrès Mondial Acadien*, which has met every five years since
1994. Serving as perhaps the world’s biggest bilingual family reunion, the Congress
presents the chance to meet cousins, learn the landscape of varied Acadian homelands,
and memorialize *le grand dérangement* (as the Louisianians call the expulsion of the
Acadians from Canada by the British in the years 1755 to 1762). These meetings have
converted many a non-practitioner to family history.

The establishment of this congress coincided with other ethnic revivals in North
America at the end of the twentieth century. Such revivals await usually at least four

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generations, a period when men and women are “sufficiently secure about their American
identity.”15 But the late twentieth century’s emphasis on social history and various efforts
to attract attention to heritage in popular culture added much to this particular type of
interest in the past, extending the interest far beyond the fourth generation theory.

Two cousins tell of their own Acadian awakening and reckoning with what can be
known within family history. One is an artist named Mary Anne DeBoisblanc (b. 1925)
who uses genealogy to find subjects for many of her paintings. The other is her cousin,
Carolyn Ivy Shimek (b. 1934), who traces ancestral lives through records, creating in turn
source notes and family trees that plot the family’s trajectory of migrations from France,
to Acadie, to various intermittent stops, and finally to Louisiana.16

For those interested in the transmission of memory, the works of Mary Anne,
Carolyn, and others in their family reveal insights into how different parts of the past are
told at different periods, and how choices of kinship and stories themselves shift over
time. These choices are not unlike the pattern mentioned in Chapter Two, of finding a
particular “crossing ancestor,” who migrated to the U.S. and can tell us something about
how “we become Americans.” Often this is a story “of hardship ... but it is also a source
of pride ... the start of a kind of spiritual pedigree.”17 It can also be much more than
that—it can bring insight into the complexity of history, memory, and records at the same
time.

One of Mary Anne and Carolyn’s chosen ancestors is a woman named Marie
Rosalie Préjean (1741–1813) (later Pécot) whose life as a teenager (and for many years

15 Kammen, “Some Patterns and Meanings of Memory Distortion,” 333.
16 Because of the public nature of the work of Mary Anne DeBoisblanc and the Miho Baccich story, the
names here are real ones.
17 Seabrooke, “A Reporter at Large,” 60.
after) was disrupted by the British deportation of the French from Acadie (now Canada). Marie Rosalie, her younger sister, four brothers, and their mother were put on one ship; two older sisters and their husbands were put on another ship. Some forty-five years later, the sisters were reunited, but not before a succession of moves in North America and the Caribbean.

*Marie Rosalie’s Story and Records about Her*

There is a series of stories, as well. One account, as Carolyn and Mary Anne tell it in the early twenty-first century, begins with Marie Rosalie and some of the family being sent to an unknown part of New England or Pennsylvania in the 1750s. This, their first home after exile, can only be guessed through the baptismal record of Marie Rosalie’s first son at two years of age in Saint Domingue (now Haiti), their second home in exile. The record, found by Carolyn in a published listing of Acadian records, is written in the style of genealogical transcriptions discussed in Chapter Five: DUPUY, JN. BAPTISTE, BORN IN NEW ENGLAND (CHARLES & ROSALIE PREJEAN, ACADIENS) BAPTIZED 27 OCT 1764.18

Family lore tells that Marie Rosalie married in either Massachusetts or Philadelphia and also had another child, a daughter Rose, but no record exists about her birth or death. A family story, some vague mention of “Santo Domingo” (Saint Domingue) had led Mary Anne first to want to know why Marie Rosalie was there. Mary Anne and Carolyn learn that their ancestors were part of a group given one-way paid passage, courtesy of the French military, to help build fortifications on the island. Between January 1764 and January 1765, thousands of Acadians were shipped to Môle St. Nicolas as indentured workers. Many died of tropical diseases and malnutrition while

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clearing the jungle—showing the cousins in 2009 at once the fragility of life, the ever-present threat of authoritarian power, and more contextual documentation.

Through friends of a friend in Haiti and France today, Mary Anne learns of death certificates for Marie Rosalie’s husband, mother, and four brothers. The next records show that in January 1768, the widow “Rosalie,” then 27 years old, married a 37-year-old French widower, François Pécot, a native of France. This marriage would produce nine children (seven of whom grew to adulthood), and provide more publicly-available records and oral accounts that allowed another cousin to write of the family’s time in Saint Domingue.

This cousin, Thomas Frère Kramer, interviews older family members and writes a small book about the family published in 2002. Through this book, Mary Anne and Carolyn learn that Marie Rosalie, at the time of the 1790s slave revolt in her second home of exile (Saint Domingue), lived right between two fighting camps, one of the runaway slaves in the mountains and the other of rebels across the Spanish border. The little enclave of the Pécots fell to the slave army led by Toussaint L’Ouverture in January 1794. François Pécot and son Louis François were beheaded. With the help of a slave named Scapin, the rest of the family escaped to Port-au-Prince where the British evacuated them to Jamaica. Scapin accompanied them to this island, where they lived for five years, until the British forced them out again, for fear the French slaves “might inflame the indigenous slave population. Gabriel Bouillet, son-in-law of Rosalie … then arranged passage, and they sailed for New Orleans and eventually [settled in] St. Mary

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Parish [a Louisiana county].” Scapin and other slaves also came with the Acadian family to Louisiana.²¹

Before Mary Anne began her work on family history, she knew none of this story. Her parents and grandparents stressed the settlement of Louisiana, not the hardships of le grand dérangement. In archival terms, transmission and pluralization can be seen as evolving processes, requiring the amassing of records from a multiplicity of places. The memories of Marie Rosalie’s life, as far as can be told, were not discussed in the family before the late nineteenth century. Narratives, it is said, “simplify.” The presence of a beginning, middle, end, or an “original state of equilibrium, a disruption, and a resolution” make the past both tenable and interesting.²² But in genealogy this simplification can take decades, awaiting the time until the story is “needed” (thus attending to identity) and the time when records can be gathered (thus attending to evidence). For the broader Pecot family (who by the end of the nineteenth century also change the spelling of their name to reflect their American citizenship), a story from the years 1750–1815 has been told in increments over now more than two centuries.

Carolyn too did not know the story of her ancestor until she began family history work in June 1976. This was after her children were grown, “before Roots” in her memory. Her father was sick and she wanted a project that would interest him. However, she also associates her own research to the 1976 novel “because the 1977 televised version of this saga brought more and more people, and more and more funding” to a field that had long been under-appreciated. She connects then the enhancement of repository budgets as well as popular interest in genealogy to her own finding of records.

Mary Anne also began family history work when both her family life and public attention to the past were aligned. In the 1960s, *National Geographic Magazine* published an article on Acadian life in Louisiana. One of her children was very sick at the time, and sitting in waiting rooms in the National Institute for Health in Bethesda, Maryland, she painted the scenes that she knew from childhood to go alongside what she read in the national magazine, to “add to it.” She didn’t have time for her art again until the early 1990s, until, with her surviving children grown, she attended a family reunion, or what she calls “a mini-reunion” to celebrate the birthday of “the oldest cousin.” This gathering “made” her “hear the story” of Marie Rosalie. “And I came home and said I have to make something about this. I began to paint her story.”

When queried more about the sequence of learning about Marie Rosalie, Carolyn begins with an oral account transcribed in the 1890s. Here again we have the framework of “four generations” needed to pass before a “revival of ethnic memory and culture” would normally arise. In addition, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries placed increasing pressures on Acadian communities to become integrated into the English-speaking cultures in Louisiana. So, the timing of the 1890s’ account also can be seen as one of a determination to tell why these families wanted to retain their own histories and/or why they might not trust their stories within the collective memory of archives, libraries, or historians.

It was during this period that two granddaughters of Marie Rosalie (Hermina Bouillet Martel and Mathilda Perret) told of the family’s experience of *le grand dérangement*. Their accounts were translated into English and written down. One translator was Gabriel Sully, grandson of Hermina. Her son, J. Scully Martel, is
mentioned in a 1924 newspaper article reporting on the reunion of the sisters. He is called the “heroic custodian” of the story. He, rather than his mother, his great-grandmother, or his son, is the featured survivor since he “went to great lengths to track down the story of the four exiled sisters.” Also praised is Marie Rosalie’s son, “Charles Pecot, one of the French pioneers who settled on the Teche and who was descended from one of the four Prejean sisters.” Thus the focus shifts to the two grown men, away from their female storytellers. This pattern of “voice and the appropriation of voice” can be read in many ways. As Robert Fisher found in tracing a 1783 account that was told within a family by women but brought to public hearing by local male historians,

Feminist scholars might read … a struggle of [women] to make their voices heard…. Historians of a contrary bent could argue that these members of the masculine elite recognized the value and ensured the survival of their feminine voices. Still others might see it as proof that the bonds of family are stronger than those of gender, class or time.

The 1890s’ account, as far as can be known from the 1924 newspaper clipping, emphasizes the reunion of the four sisters. To learn more, Mary Anne had friends contact genealogists in Canada, Haiti, and France. From these contacts, she learns simple dates to give to the period of exile in Saint Domingue, and learns for the first time, of the time spent in Jamaica. These details move her: it is the “overwhelming” nature of the account that has tremendous power (families separated, maltreatment in exile, struggles to make a better life in Saint Domingue, then revolution, the beheading of a husband and a son, further exile, in total four dangerous boat trips with uncertain destinations, and yet

reunion and long life for Marie Rosalie, the establishment of a family that continues. It is a very moving story indeed and the placement of it within an academic account is not easy. It is not unlike anthropologist Mark Auslander finds in other family history: A desire for unity and connections in the face of great change bolsters present goals and rituals of family life. But it is also more, mainly because the dispersement of people, records, and stories reveals how rare and precious survival of traces of the past are, how close they come to being forgotten. The union of the people, records, stories in the lives of Mary Anne and Carolyn signifies continuity and change but also gratitude to those people who in the midst of such turmoil left traces of their lives. The story itself is a diaspora of meanings. In four exhibitions, Marie Rosalie becomes the focal point of Mary Anne’s art work. The 2009 exhibition is even called “Le Triomphe de Marie Rosalie.”

Mary Anne discusses her own life, the severe genetic illness of one of her sons, the early and unexpected death of her husband and another son, and then refers to Marie Rosalie and her perseverance.

As asked about why Marie Rosalie’s story became known, Carolyn speaks of a different sort of perseverance, of herself and others with records. She credits being able to find ancestors to the work of those who have transcribed documents. In a 2004 email to cousins working on family history, Carolyn writes about her mother’s ancestors:

It was so easy to research her lines as there is a Rev. Hébert who has abstracted all of the church and courthouse records in about 40 volumes. These are at the Clayton Genealogy Library and all I had to do was follow them back in time from my mother who is listed in the last volume (1909). They took me back to 1754.

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25 Auslander, “Something We Need to Get Back To.”
26 Carolyn Shimek, email to Bethany Bultman and others, August 21, 2004, Bethany Bultman Collection, Newcomb Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
She also remarks on “how lucky” she has been to live near this particular library, the Clayton Library for Genealogical Research, “one of the top ten in the country.” This collection attracts many out-of-town visitors, and their librarians and archivists become part of the almost celebrity-like culture within the world of genealogy.\(^{27}\) In such a library, Carolyn could draw from late nineteenth-century biographical directories and local histories\(^{28}\) and the long and continuing transcription and publication efforts of genealogists,\(^{29}\) discussed in Chapter Five.

Carolyn maintains files that show traces not just of ancestors but also of these collecting institutions and the people within them. Asking her about the Jamaican period of exile for Marie Rosalie and the family who had escaped Saint Domingue, she sends information about “22 hand-calligraphed, 11 x 17 pages, now loose and laminated, formerly bound—probably from the early 20th century.” Microfilmed, these records make up part of the Kingston, Jamaica Catholic Church Registers project, work coordinated by archivists in Jamaica and New Orleans. The records contain a rich source for those whose ancestors came from or were exiled in Jamaica: “Baptisms 1817–1826, Marriages 1800?–1819, Baptisms (of slaves and free people of color) 1804–1834 … (the names of the godparents and the names of the owners of the slave being baptized).”\(^{30}\)

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\(^{30}\) Announcement from New Orleans Public Library, Louisiana Division, 2000, personal files, Carolyn Ivy Shimek.
As to why the family did not discuss the story of Marie Rosalie’s life beyond some vague mention of the reunion of the sisters, Carolyn believes “they were too busy living.” Besides, “family history was talk then, generally. And would they have talked of this around children?” One can also ask if the ousting of the Acadians by the British, the poor treatment of the Acadians throughout North America, the failure of the French to aid the Acadians in so many places, the poor welcome in Jamaica, and even the governing of Louisiana as an English-speaking state—if, for all these reasons, Marie Rosalie and her descendants had reasons to remain quiet? Collective memory, for whatever reason, emphasized settlement, and did not tell of Marie Rosalie’s long horrendous journey.

Overall the history of this Acadian woman’s story can be listed as continuing within the family’s three or four generations after her arrival in Louisiana when it is dictated in French, translated and written in English, moving from a private account kept in the family to others in the local area. 31 Five generations after the arrival, it is interpreted again this time with a public presentation in a newspaper article that emphasizes “romance” not of male to female love, but of the beauty of Louisiana, the joyful reunion, set within a frame praising the male members of the family as settlers of the region, and as tellers of the family story. 32 Six and seven generations after arrival, the story becomes a part of a larger story about hardship and survival—especially about Marie Rosalie and the women of the family—as interpreted with records in genealogical files, and with imagination in paintings. 33

32 Frost, “Strange Romance of 4 Sisters.”
33 Bethany Ewald Bultman and Mary Anne DeBoisblanc, The Spirit of Acadian Women, exhibition guide (St. Martinville, LA: Acadian Memorial Foundation, 2005); Bultman and DeBoisblanc, A String of Pearls. Other exhibits were at the Louisiana State Old Courthouse Museum, Natchitoches, LA (2008); Newcomb Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA (2009).
Linking the Family to Collective Memory

Despite this slow revelation of their family history, Mary Anne and Carolyn both recall other aspects of family history in their early lives. They remember family gatherings, portraits, photographs, and graveyards. They also both speak of the statue of the literary heroine Evangeline in St. Martinville, Louisiana. In her exhibition catalog Mary Anne writes:

Ever since childhood, Evangeline has had a mystical hold on me as an Acadian woman.... It was Evangeline’s spirit that guided me to the Acadian Memorial.... It was here, I realized that Marie Rosalie’s story belonged. Then my Pecot cousin [and here she is referring to Carolyn] told me Marie Rosalie was actually buried on February 11, 1813 at St. Martin de Tours.  

St. Martin de Tours is the church near the Acadian Memorial, where Mary Anne had an exhibition of paintings in 2005 and 2007.

The 1847 poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, upon which the statue’s name is based, follows an Acadian young woman he named Evangeline in her search for her lost love, Gabriel. The two have been parted from one another (much as the sisters were) during le grand dérangement. Longfellow based his story on a second-hand account told by a Massachusetts Episcopal priest. To learn the landscape of Louisiana, the poet relied upon his sister’s telling of a journey to New Orleans and a panorama called “Three-Mile Painting,” a moving screen that allowed viewers to sit in Boston and experience what a journey down the Mississippi River would be like. He also visited libraries and read T. C. Halliburton’s Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia (1829) and Guillaume-

Thomas-François Raynal’s account of the expulsion published in 1770.\textsuperscript{36} This research shows the trail of sources (transmission and pluralization) that were available and acceptable to Longfellow. It is notable that he did not rely upon genealogical records, though one scholar at least speculates on his use of the Massachusetts Historical Society.\textsuperscript{37}

Longfellow’s poem was an immediate and continuing success. This popularity rested on both the poignant story and the singsong of the poet’s dactylic hexameter. Reminiscent of Greek and Latin classics, but at the same time different (since classicists long held that verse in hexameter was not suited to English), the rhythm added another tier of cultural import. Generations of American schoolchildren have memorized the poem, knowing nothing of these various layers of research or American adaptations to the style or the story.\textsuperscript{38}

Besides its poignancy and catchy meter, Longfellow’s poem became popular because there was so little actually known about the expulsion of the French from Acadie. Among Acadians themselves, Evangeline was seen as a positive role model, one of the only Acadians revered within mainstream English-speaking American and Canadian cultures.\textsuperscript{39} Yet, in discussion of public and private memory, it should be acknowledged that Longfellow’s poem left out the role of New England militiamen in the burning of Acadian farms during the expulsion. On the other side of the poem’s critics were, of course, those who attacked the poem as too sympathetic to the Acadians, stating

\textsuperscript{37} Barbara LeBlanc, “The Dynamic Relationship between Historic Site and Identity Construction: Grand-Pré and the Acadians” (PhD diss., Université Laval, 1994), 97.
that Longfellow had painted in “too soft colors the rude robustness … of the peasants of Grand Pré.” Nevertheless, these arguments were not widely heard in Louisiana. While there are other stories of Acadians parted and then reunited from one another to which the Louisianians have looked, none proved so compelling as the Longfellow poem. The poem is still a reference point for Mary Anne and Carolyn.

Symbolically, Mary Anne “adds” Evangeline as part of her own family. In exhibits and catalogs, a photograph of the statue and a drawing of Longfellow are always near her own Acadian family images. Evangeline is the most obvious aspect of the recontextualization of the story of her ancestors, part of the “bigger picture,” her cousin the genealogist says.

The origin of the statue is itself representative of how specific memory texts cross between public and private realms. It was sculpted during the making of the 1929 film Evangeline produced by the Edwin Carewe Company of Hollywood. (An earlier 1913 film was made in Canada; and there are, of course, many songs about Evangeline, as well.) The famous actress Dolores Del Rio, who played the role of Evangeline, was so impressed by the story that she offered to pay for a monument to honor the heroine. The statue was fashioned in the actress’ likeness and immediately became a tourist attraction. The unveiling was attended by some 15,000 people, including a group of Acadians from Canada.

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Evangeline—the exiled and patient woman, the statue, the song, the poem itself and its popularity—functions as a gendered history within the larger international history. Evangeline, for Mary Anne and Carolyn, moves between public and private memories.

Finally, the Marie Rosalie story also goes outside the family via a genealogical research group, the St. Domingue Special Interest Group active in New Orleans. From this group, sociologist Angel Adams Parham learns of Mary Anne’s paintings. Parham studies both this mainly European American family history group and another one made up primarily of Creoles of Color, called LA Creole. As part of her study of race and the intersections of private histories with public accounts, Parham is especially interested in Mary Anne’s interpretation of her ancestors’ time in Saint Domingue. Next to a painting of Toussaint L’Ouverture, Mary Anne has written in both the catalog and on the exhibition label:

I wish I could tell General Toussaint that I forgive him for taking the lives of my ancestors in Sté. Domingue during the revolution. I understand that he was a product of his time. In the Pécot name, I would also ask his forgiveness for the Pécot’s ownership of slaves. They, too, were products of their time. I pray that all of our souls will rest in peace.

As Parham comments, “Mary Anne is attempting to use her family history research as a site of reflection and public social commentary.” Although “rare within the family history networks” studied by Parham (and in this present study), Mary Anne’s remarks can be seen as a “first step toward cross-racial dialogue concerning contentious social issues from the past.” Parham also notes that attending the opening speeches at one of Mary Anne’s exhibits was the first time she had ever heard the forced migrations of

Acadians likened to the forced enslavement and removal of Africans from Africa. But, as we have seen in Chapter Five, at least some family historians do know of these and other expulsions, thus of private histories informing collective memory especially about migration. Marie Rosalie’s account then continues to be told in successive steps. See Figure 1 in which the divisions of public and private memory texts as told by men and women are shown.

With the assistance of Ellen Bull and Britt Blevins in computer graphics, I designed Figures 1–3 to show movements and layers.

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44 Parham, “Race, Memory and Family History,” 19–24.
45 With the assistance of Ellen Bull and Britt Blevins in computer graphics, I designed Figures 1–3 to show movements and layers.
Always Remembered

Increasingly, technology has made knowing many varied interpretations about ancestors possible, and possible more quickly as well. Communities of cousins extend across time and space to inform one another about existing records: recall how Michele Lapointe-Lehmann found her Audet-Lapointe Family in Chapter Five, and how Alexandre Pécot, perhaps a cousin of Mary Anne and Carolyn, whose posting began this chapter, seeks his cousins who left France. Consider yet another account of one family and many different voices, spread over time and space, but this one meant more deliberately to harness the imperative to remember. Jonathan Jordan (b. 1953) introduces what he calls “our family story” by noting that in 1990 his cousin Gustave “Gus” Rathe (b. 1921) published an account taken from a handwritten family manuscript describing his grandfather’s survival of a shipwreck in the late nineteenth century. Like the story of the ancestor of Mary Anne and Carolyn, Gus’s grandfather and Jonathan’s great-grandfather, Miho Baccich, had a complicated and riveting “crossing” story involving European power and a new home in North America. The differences in the trajectories of the accounts (Marie Rosalie’s to Miho’s) have to do with a chosen (rather than a forced) migration, with education, with preservation of memory texts of various sorts, with a later time period, and with a wider geographic area. The differences have to do with social and economic circumstances, as well as technologies that allow greater chances of passage of records within the building of collective memory. The differences have to do, too, with

46 As in the previous example, showing the public nature of this family’s story, the actual names have been used. Gustave Rathe, The Wreck of the Barque Stefano Off the North West Cape of Australia in 1875 (Edinburgh, UK: Cannongate Press, 1992); Gustave Rathe, The Wreck of the Barque Stefano Off the North West Cape of Australia in 1875 (Victoria Park, Australia: Hesperian Press, 1990). The Australian and the Scottish editions of the book are slightly different with the Scottish account giving more information on sources.
the seminal events: The Baccich story does not have the moments of “black distress”\textsuperscript{47} that the Acadian one does.

The account told in numerous interviews with four people from the Baccich family begins when Miho, just a teenager, leaves his home in Croatia in the 1870s as a worker aboard his uncle’s barque, the “Stefano,” bound for England to take coal to Hong Kong. Off the western coast of Australia, the ship runs aground and only Miho and another teenager survive. After near starvation, cannibalism of the dead sailors, and treks through the hot desert, they are helped by aborigines. Eventually, the boys meet the captain of a pearling ship who secures their passage back to Europe. At home, Miho and the other survivor tell their story to a Jesuit scholar who writes down the experiences of the shipwreck, the long journey of survival, the flora and fauna of the land, the saving of the boys by aborigines, and the assistance of colonial white Australians. Two copies of the manuscript are made.

Jonathan’s mother, Peggy Jordan (b. 1926) today remembers being told that Miho’s parents thought it wise that their son and the other survivor tell their story to a “Jesuit priest.” The family today guesses that the presence of an authority (a Jesuit) was crucial: Cannibalism even among starving boys was of concern.

Peggy also tells of, and shows a print from, a votive painting, circa 1877, still hanging in a church in Dubrovnik, also commissioned in gratitude for the survival of the boys. This other dedicated memory form is inscribed with names and dates (i.e., the name of the ship and its captain, the dates of the shipwreck, the rescue, and place of rescue by the pearling ship). In the painting, the Virgin Mary and Child overlook the procession of aborigines on the beach seeing the boys begin their journey home. In the tradition of such

\textsuperscript{47} LeBlanc, “The Dynamic Relationship,” 90.
offerings, the artist inscribes the words “terrible sufferings” and adds the length of the boys’ stay in Australia. A solemn promise is offered in gratitude for their survival. Family members from the U.S., who have traveled to Croatia specifically to see it, describe the painting as “surprisingly small but moving.”

*Dedicated Memory*

The manuscript and the painting are also known to others in the large family and others outside the family. Miho’s story is told about in a book published for a limited number of readers, a documentary film, and an extended conversation among his descendants, descendants of the aborigines who see the book as proof of their ownership of land in the 1870s, and descendants of the pearling ship captain, as well as others who tell the story in various ways. Australian-Croatian scholar and filmmaker Josko Petkovic, for example, has written of issues of authorship in the manuscript. Petkovic believes that young Miho wrote most of the manuscript. What is most interesting about Petkovic’s conclusions is that he too tells of the intervention of the parents, their need to make a record: Canon Srkurla “was commissioned by Miho’s parents” to tell their son’s story.

But the story can also be seen as beginning with the type of society in which Miho lived. Seafaring families then, as now, understood the possibility of death at sea, the need to keep records of goods and people, and the names of seamen. They also understood thankfulness for survival, the recompense, and the hedge against loss inscribed in such paintings and in such accounts. The church in Dubrovnik is filled with such offerings to

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48 A photograph of the painting appears in both editions of Rathe, *The Wreck of the Barque Stefano* within a middle section of the book with other images (on unnumbered pages).


memory and gratitude, according to Meg Jordan Bradley (b. 1949) who visited there in the 1980s.

After his return, Miho attended seaman’s school, and soon his uncle gave the young man command of his own ship, called the “Resurrection.” This name was appropriate for his survival, for his continuing crossing of oceans. The name also could be seen to stand symbolically for what Simon Titley-Baynes called the “resurrective functions of genealogy.”

Family stories tell how Miho, as the captain of the Resurrection, made his way to New Orleans. Here he decided to remain. Family stories suggest that he made that one trip to prove to himself that the sea was not his favored place of employment. In New Orleans, he became involved instead in land, in real estate. His wife, his children, and his grandchildren documented these interests in other family records, notably in albums his granddaughters made. They also sought out public records about him.

The accounts of the family and the public records are extended today by the Internet, another agent of transmission. The excerpt at the beginning of the chapter tells of the Stefano now being a part of a museum in Australia. Also, much of Petkovic’s work is online, and there are other interpretations of the meaning of Miho’s story. The Croatian Chronicle, a Croatian-American newspaper, features the story of Miho in an article entitled, “Croats in Louisiana and Mississippi: A Century Long Story.” This article by John Peter Kralijc tells the same story that the family and Gus’s book tell. However, Kralijc emphasizes the settlement of New Orleans by Croats:

Baccich was surprised by New Orleans. “How ironic that in my first glimpse of America, where I expected to find Americans or men of English origin, I found a very European city with a variety of Europeans. During the next week, I was to discover many attractive features of this exciting place. First, it was so large and dynamic—over 200,000 residents! The Croatian colony was also large, nearly a thousand people, and [I was] introduced to many of them. A large number were already owners of their own small businesses, retail stores, restaurants and oyster fisheries (a favorite business among Dalmatians).” Baccich said that for four days he socialized “with the local Croatians and I saw a camaraderie that I had never known before.” He made up his mind: Baccich stayed in New Orleans, married a local Croatian woman and became a successful businessman. His efforts were rewarded by the naming of a city street after him in the city (the street runs parallel to the Inner Harbor Navigation Channel).\footnote{John Peter Kraljic, “Croats in Louisiana and Mississippi: A Centuries Long Story Croatian Chronicle,” \url{http://www.croatia.org/October 1, 2007} (accessed September 10, 2008).}

The street name, “Baccich Street,” inscribes the story upon the geography of the city of New Orleans, a detail of importance to keeping the whole of the story alive. These are also layers within the evolving account concerning Miho, his shipwreck, his telling of the account to a Jesuit scholar who inscribed it, his voyage and settlement in New Orleans, and his family’s continuing reinterpretation of the story and their living memories.

Ordered chronologically, the Baccich archives dates from 1876, the first letter Miho writes to tell of his survival to the annotation of the account by some descendants of the language group that rescued him. There are approximately thirteen artifacts and five examples of living memory shown on Figure 2.
Figure 2

- Artifact
- Book
- Carbon Copy
- Email
- Interview
- Language group
- Letter
- Living Memory
- Manuscript
- Name
- Notebook
- Online
- Painting
- Photocopy
- Video
Ordered in terms of public versus private records, the archives can be seen as follows in Figure 3 with blue typescript marking the private records and green marking public records.
The Barque Stefano, which was captained by Vlaho Miloslavich, was wrecked in 1875 near Point Cloutes in Australia. Ivan Jurich and Miho Baccich survive.

**Figure 3**

The categories are not fixed. The letter of 1876 can shift to a public record if it, like the manuscript, is placed in a cultural repository.
The family and others have spread these various texts literally and figuratively among various people, repositories, and across three continents. Some of the records and stages of knowing were completely unknown to Peggy, Jonathan, and others in the family. Some of the records still exist in their original form within the family, within archives, within museums, within churches, and within other families. The “collection” of the memory is reshaped each generation, but it is ordered in relation to the story of Miho—his shipwreck, survival, passage to New Orleans—and more, the near continual memory of these three seminal events by himself and others.

What the family members “possess” (since, like other family historians and album makers, they assume the copies and the oral accounts make the overall collection “their own”) is a mnemonic framework: a history of transmission, a pattern of passing on the story. The public “reach” is made wider by the story in the book, the bell in the museum, the street name in New Orleans. In private they own—either symbolically or physically—the stories told, the handwritten accounts duplicated for one another, and the continuing letters between themselves and far-flung “others” attached to the family through Miho in Croatia, Australia, and the U.S.

Gus’s book indirectly describes how he found records and thus expanded the translation of his grandmother. Translation, Bruno Latour reminds us, is not just about the shift from one language to another, but about “displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and to some degree modifies two elements or agents.” In his introduction, in votive fashion similar to all introductions—but striking here because of the reader’s knowledge of the votive painting, Rathe names various people and events enabling this greater reach of the manuscript’s account. For

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example, he thanks the great-grandson of the captain of the pearling ship who rescued his grandfather. How does he find him? Through letters sent asking for help via a “new found friend” in Tasmania: an advertisement was placed in Perth newspapers.

This led to my meeting John Honniball of Perth, the captain’s great-grandson, a Fellow of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, and the author of a published family history [emphasis made for this study] that included an account of the wreck of the Stefano based on early newspaper accounts.

He also thanks others in various cultural institutions in Washington, D.C., Australia, and Croatia.55

Gus’s acknowledgements demonstrate not only the path to the story itself, but also some of the gathering of records (ship records, church records, city directories, manuscripts, paintings) and their retention in families and institutions. His gratitude to these records and record holders also reminds us that his family expects memorialization and expects to find records. They inherited the Dubrovnik expectation of public inscription of memories.

New Orleans, too, held circumstances that enabled transmission and pluralization. Miho’s wife Angelina Cietcovich spoke five languages, since, though born in New Orleans, she came from a Dalmatian family, who in their native land had spoken both Croatian and Italian. New Orleans had German- and French-speaking schools, and her family thought that speaking these languages would help them advance socially and financially. She also, of course, learned English, since the city was an American one, after all. In the diplomatic sense, transmission depends on translation and publication, and this family had both nearby.

In the accounts of the family, Angelina is referred to as a scholar, a new role for women of her time. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren’s pride in this achievement, so many generations later, is noticeable. Angelina’s translation of the Italian manuscript written by the Jesuit priest and brought to America by her husband allowed her children and grandchildren to read and to hear the account. She wrote in a simple notebook, that later, a daughter who was skilled at bookbinding, bound in dark green leather (a very stiff, substantial cover, just like a commercial book). On the front in the upper third is imprinted (embossed? into the leather) a shield with three seahorses, behind which are the wavy lines of the sea. Above that is the title, again embossed.56

Each of the seven children was given a copy of the translation, typed by another daughter. From his mother (the oldest daughter), Gus inherited both Angelina’s transcription, now bound, and a typed carbon copy.

All through this trajectory of the story of Miho, records would not be possible without technology: writing technologies (of the Italian Jesuit), of the artist of the votive painting, of Angelina’s pencil and her notebooks, and of the simple requirements of letter writing and postal services, the printing press, and the computer. Today technology makes communication and transmission all the more rapid, allowing, for example, quick access to the Croation Chronicle, and Petkovic’s scholarly debate on Angelina’s intentions, set within his translation, Within this latter work, Petkovic layers the translations, the collective memories with the earlier versions, and tells the reader how he does this.

56 Leslie Crowell Rathe, email to author, April 16, 2009. The bookbinder was Eunice Baccich; some of her other work is available in the Newcomb Archives.
Meanwhile, family history is lived in New Orleans through Miho’s and Angelina’s examples in other ways. Peggy and her children cast present activities of the family, especially the making of family albums, within this larger account of Miho. The albums they show are called “Baccich and Lemarie families, 1870–1940,” and “The Lemarie, Swigart, and Jordan Album, 1940 to 2003.” Both albums bear this subtitle: “from original pictures saved, printed and edited by Betty Lemarie.” (Betty, now deceased, was Peggy’s sister.) Made with the help of one of Peggy’s daughters, the albums are huge (3 inches in depth) loose-leaf binders with photocopied pages, very like the albums popularized as family memory books by Marielen Christensen in Utah and discussed in Chapter Three. Each binder was duplicated so as to be given as gifts to each family member who requested one, thus extending transmission.

Peggy discusses the names of the albums as she turns their pages. The Croatian name, she says, can be traced to the 1650s as being Becetic, Bacic, Bassich. The other names also hold living memory that must be told to outsiders. The Alsatian “Lemarie”—pronounced Lemarié but written without the accent since the early 1900s, the German “Swigart,” and the English “Jordan” transmit another kind of living and archival memory, one kind of recontextualization, and a very vivid form of a pluralized society that is yet restricted by sound, by alphabetic symbols recognizable to particular communities. Though family historians and album makers tend most to discuss forenames as specific marks of transmission, the study of all names (onomastics) is never far from their thinking. As Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman note in their study of child-naming patterns in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Virginia, names reveal much about those who choose them and “the culture that delimits the pool of names from which they
choose.” Peggy and others interested in family history understand this process. Here the transmission of memory is concerned with choices. “Grandfather chose the name so it would make sense to Americans,” she states. She does not comment on “Lemarie,” its spelling or its continued pronunciation, Lemarié. Such accommodations in New Orleans are so common as to go unspoken. They are one of the invisibles of collective memory but also of insider status. To live here is to know the pronunciation.

But one of the great-granddaughters, Mary Lee (b. 1945), also evokes the power of names in deciding life-changing decisions, and her “standing-in” for her grandfather:

I changed my [last] name to Baccich when I entered the seminary, to invoke the strong spirit of Miho. After doing so, I have gone to Australia twice and am rebuilding in New Orleans, the [part of the] city here [that] he and his partners built, the Gentilly Terrace area. I believe changing my name evoked all his genetic material within me and influenced my life to include his own history. Meeting with the Aborigines fulfilled a dream he had of returning to Australia and meeting with them again.

Similarly, the family albums hold other invisibles that must be elaborated upon by insiders if outsiders are to understand the context. This story and other family stories come to life through Peggy narrating her memories as she looks at the albums. Some of the images and words, transcribed, translated, and recontextualized by her sister and later, her daughter, Peggy recontextualizes again in showing them.

Memories of wartime; family births, weddings, and deaths; images and plans of family homes in general, alongside certificates and letters are interpreted as much or as little as she desires to tell. Comments appear in Betty’s albums and some are marked, “Peggy’s words” or “Peggy’s comments.” One especially moving example of this is a short paragraph “Peggy’s Comments Concerning Jenny” a child who died “one month

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short of her eighth birthday.” The sisters do not consider, or Peggy does not tell me if they consider, this memorialization as a legacy of the votive paintings of their great-grandparents, or the manuscript of survival their grandfather brought to America, but it is difficult not to see this connection. Life here is honored by inscription.

In “Sharing Memories,” Eric Ketelaar uses the term “collective memories,” as he says, “on purpose” to show the multiplicity of strands of memory.\(^58\) Literary critic James Young modifies the plurality of memory to show its intentionality, calling it “collected memory,” that is, representative of the sometimes conflicting accounts brought together in the common space of monuments and commemorations.\(^59\) In the Baccich family history, these varying modifications to collective memories and collected memory lead from and to a living memory, subject to changes as the story continues long after its original creators, captors, and organizers are gone.

**Dynamic Memory**

In a document-rich society, where the descendants of Marie Rosalie Préjean Pecot and Miho Baccich live, there are many reasons to argue that memory is both a living and an archival practice.\(^60\) Their memories are dependent on archivalization and recordkeeping practices, but neither the records nor the processes are static. The full story of Marie Rosalie, including more than just the Acadian expulsion and the reunion, awaited the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century because only then was there the technology to easily gather information, and the social framework that allowed

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\(^{58}\) Ketelaar, “Sharing,” 47.


\(^{60}\) As noted in Chapter One, this contradicts Nora’s position, who does not believe that memory, which is “first of all archival,” is also experienced from “within.” Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 6–8.
some interpretation of the various historic upheavals. Similarly, the great-grandchildren of Miho Baccich themselves are conscious of the movement of the story across various realms. Recalling the details of their Australian visits in 2006 and 2007, they comment on how “Papa” (as Miho was called even by great-grandchildren) “stayed in contact with the pearling ship captain, his children with the pearling ship captain’s children, and us, with the aborigines.” This succession was not only because of social customs but also because of technologies available to them. The great-grandchildren mention travel to remote parts of Australia being harsh. They went clandestinely, aided by permission to pass through a naval base where there would be water, but they could not have gone at all a century earlier.

They went also because society had changed enough that they could see Miho’s story as centrally involving people of other colors. An individual’s identity, Anthony Giddens notes, is located in the capacity to perpetuate a narrative. This narrative must join together disparate strands of the self into the story of the self.\textsuperscript{61} What is shown in family history is the same, but the temporal and spatial distance is greater and requires movement, recasting, transmission, and ultimately to be tested, it also requires evidence, and it requires records. In family history, oral accounts, copies, translations, and other representations are more intimately and persistently dependent on continuing transmission. Transmission of this sort is therefore necessarily dynamic.

The album makers believe that their albums create, modify, or maintain relationships with other people. The family historians believe that their collections of

materials similarly add to a knowledge base, to the puzzle of the past (thus also creating, modifying, maintaining, or extinguishing various relationships). The whole of their processes are embedded within movement and thus in dynamic memory.

Their emphasis is foremost on a useful record, but for most of them this is defined in the present, though created for “generations to come.” They want, as a family historian introduced in Chapter Five, Catherine (b. 1959), notes, for future readers of their efforts to be able to see “the family dynamics, the patterns that have been repeated over and over and over. That at surface level you don’t see.”

For the family historians and album makers, the patterns and the surface levels are important. The interviewees and communities studied all worked to fit themselves and their findings into a particular history. They chose particular ancestors to track, particular events to understand, and/or particular artifacts to let stand symbolically for an event or life. They did so by using particular records to fit what they need in the present.

The Hospitality of Memory, Ideas, and Nations

Miho represented his memories of survival in Australia in yet one other representation that his descendants continue to articulate. A name—that most familiar and living form of a genealogical legacy—was given to one of his children to convey the way he wanted the story remembered. This was his second child, a daughter born on the 27th of October, 1890, the fifteenth anniversary of the Australian shipwreck. He initially chose the name “Australia,” but his multi-lingual wife had different ideas. She suggested a Greek name—Euxenia—from eu-xenos, which translated literally as “high [regard for] the stranger.”62 The family tells of this meaning and believes it was given to remind them “of the lifesaving care bestowed on their husband and father, the stranger, by the people

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of the distant land.” Today the name has been passed down through three generations of other women. Here again the memory is layered in subsequent generations of Miho’s descendants.

However, layering suggests, as has been noted throughout this study, a topographical configuration, requiring the removal of different strata to understand the true complexity of environment, the ground, and, in the case of family history—the earth itself as ephemeral for humans. The most recent generation of Baccich descendants has changed the place of the name Euxenia to a middle name, since its foreignness did not always work for the family in a primarily English-speaking environment. The story of the name rather than the name itself finds meaning in the present. This is a passage indicative of something Adriana Piscitelli found in her study of memory and gender among Brazilian families. Varying styles of telling of the past are readjusted generationally. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren frame their own actions around, for example, Miho’s brief mention of changing race relations in segregated New Orleans, and aiding others along the Gulf Coast when hurricanes struck—shifting these actions to meet needs in the present.

Mary Lee Gregory Baccich, for example, spoke of these changes when she told of her new name, and the traces Miho left to mark his thankfulness towards Australia. Asked if the overall story, and now her part in it, seemed to her a typical one of genealogical pursuit, albeit more dramatic than most, she replied, “I do. It is simply a story of the world.”

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63 Ibid.
How might this be so? She did not say except to continue to talk about the reciprocity of hospitality between her family and people in Australia.

The stranger, well received and nurtured, is a familiar one in teaching, in religion, and in history. Since the Homeric accounts of the Odyssey, there always have been aspirations for, and lives lived around, the concept of “guest-friendship, xenia…. How a civil society [is maintained] … [via this] mark of civilization.” Not totally altruistic, the idea of xenia takes into account that one has a better chance of being received as a guest if one receives others as guests. This might have been what Angelina recalled as she named her child, a child in a country new to her husband, and a husband who had seen other old and new cultures. Xenia remains a theme of democracy within the U.S. Despite the nativist movement, which voiced so much fear and prejudice towards immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, various government-sanctioned acts and genealogical efforts increasingly promote the inclusion of all immigrants, promote their welcome. Public events such as the official establishment of Thanksgiving as a holiday (1863), and the opening of Ellis Island Immigrant Museum (1990) are but two examples on a national scale from two centuries. The Family History Center atop the Los Angeles Holocaust Museum and part of the Museum of Tolerance allows a similar association between tolerance for many diverse people and an ideal, a hope, offered not only first to immigrants to the U.S. but also to others who may search for family history there.

Studying family history in the U.S., one then returns to ideas about nationality and citizenship. The idea of any welcoming nation would not have come to Marie Rosalie Pécot during most of her exile from Acadie. Nor did it come to her family, in the form of

a family history until much later. Individual stories—their content and their ways of being told—are dictated by what a particular society promotes as worth remembering or forgetting, as Selma Leydesdorff notes. Every culture also deals with what it wishes to forget. Both remembering and forgetting are represented within “individual psychology, the ways people tell about memories and the ways they like to be seen.” For the Baccich family, the shipwreck, though painful for Miho, included always recognition of an environment of this hospitality. Yet, both the poet Longfellow and the Baccich family represented accounts of ultimately redemptive memory in the names of women. The name Evangeline was not an Acadian one, but chosen by Longfellow to represent the angelic nature (from the Greek meaning like an angel) of an ideal and patient woman—a woman to carry memory. The angel Gabriel, biblically a carrier of news, did not transmit the same kind of message; his namesake is not given the leading role in Longfellow’s poem.

The Baccich account is relevant to a gendered history in another way. Miho had not only an educated wife to translate the story, but also six daughters and one son. Miho had then a female-dominated family in which the youngest daughter, Anna, typed the translation from her mother’s notebooks and gave them to the next generation. As noted in Chapter Five, much about family history depends upon these types of circumstances of transmission.

Both the Marie Rosalie and the Miho stories, gendered as they are, likely will yield additional meanings, other places where the appropriation of names and voices in

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67 Ibid.
family history will allow different layers of personal and public relevance. We cannot know what they will be. Instead, we wait and think what types of circumstances welcome both living and archival memory.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

I’m not American by default. It’s a choice. But it is a mask. Who, in the thronged avenues of Manhattan, has not known this? It is the same, for the Korean saleswoman or the Bangladeshi businessman or the Nigerian student, for the Iowan nurse and the Montanan secretary, as it is for me: Americanness draws a veil, it lends a carapace to the lives we hold within.

From Claire Messud, *The Last Life*¹

When asked why genealogists are so nice, Schelly replied that you have to be nice to everyone, because you don’t know who will have the next piece of the puzzle on which you’re working.

From Steve’s Genealogy Blog²

I too cut my scrapbooking teeth on the very first white plastic templates CM [Creative Memories] made…. But I was a scrapbook wannabe for 18 years, knowing it was important but not ever really scrapping. I discovered Heritage Makers two years ago, and stopped being a wannabe & collector and became a Heritage Makers Personal Publishing Consultant. I made over four projects my first six months and was hooked. We had record sales last month....

From Beth M., Blogger on Creative Memories’ bankruptcy in November 2008³

The above quotations are included as final reminders of the metanarrative of migration in the public presentation of family history; the tolerance, one might even say self-serving intentions, but nevertheless karma, demanded for many purposes in family

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history practices; and the potential transmission of records as influenced by the economy. In the latter case, online templates for family history allow an electronic and a physical scrapbook. The electronic one is cheaper, and is likely, for a few years at least, to be a more viable choice for heritage album makers.

As presented in other chapters, philosophies, practicalities, and inventions have created a plentitude of forms to represent the past, inscriptions in the metaphoric book of life and in the real records of lives, and the transmission of records across time and space. Memory keepers, many of whom have served as the foundation of the first knowledge of their family’s past, are now emerging more visibly in the world of recordkeeping and record creation. Their creation and use of records in the public environment of the Internet and in shared endeavors have changed the way memory is transmitted and pluralized.

This chapter asks then for an overall attention to what archival science offers to these other, already publicly known benefits of family history. The “archival role in the shaping collective memory” is addressed first by describing possible programs archivists could adopt in services to researchers of family history, and second, by suggesting future study about family historians and album makers. But first, one final review will be explored: the importance of settings, and then something of the differences and commonalities between family historians and album makers.

Settings

Of all the topics discussed, family historians and album makers have emphasized the types of environments where memory is likely to be sought and shaped. These

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5 Reed, “Beyond Perceived Boundaries,” 189.
particular settings are ones where knowledge of records are parts of day-to-day life; where informal and formal education have prepared people to follow the trace of the past in oral accounts and written evidence; and where there exists too some perceived need of making the past continue in the present and future, some ritualistic and psychological engagement with what can be learned from records. This environment is also one that encourages the insertion of the self and family into publicly available spaces (literal or figurative) representing the past. In such places, memory practitioners see themselves as stakeholders in knowing and telling the past, involved, like archivists, in “representation, recall and dissemination.”

Layers and the movement of records are also part of the design of such a setting, since, as many family historians and album makers noted, “We keep finding more records.” This is part of their emphasis on the continuum of connecting the world, connecting all humankind—a Mormon principle, but one always modestly apparent in the work of people interested in family history. The abundance and accessibility of records and the ensuing growth in the numbers of people who use them also has to do with commercial vendors, libraries, and archives and, of course, technology. So, family historians and album makers march with these other agents in many of the same parades. It is this growing network carrying records that makes for a more capacious definition of transmission here in this project. Ultimately too, this more capacious definition influences pluralization, that process whereby eventually records make parts of collective memory.

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7 McKemmish, as cited by Michael Steemson, “Confident Australian Records Managers.”
The network carrying records for family history work is vast. Cyndi’s List alone, begun only in 1996, provides 264,040 links in more than 180 categories. Appropriately for this project the categories begin with “Acadian, Cajun, and Creole” and go through “Writing Your Family’s History”—subjects attentive to beginning interests and processes of work, especially to products of family history transmitted to others. On this list, archives are placed with other cultural repositories: “Libraries, Archives, & Museums,” sharing then as the institutional representatives of memory texts. But it is the total list of Cyndi’s that allows a visual representation of how much family history work is shared. Together, all these people and machines move memory texts across time and space.

In considering this movement, the ideas of Anthony Giddens, who so influenced records continuum thinking, are again helpful. Both family historians and album makers are, in Giddens’ schematic, communities marked by present activities, yet influenced by structure carried from distant times and places, older “locales” reproduced in the present. These structures are familiar and provide “ontological security.” But change within any life and especially within lives marked by movement, by migration, also brings reflexivity, a pondering over “‘theoretical understanding’ of the grounds of their” activities. In seeking to understand change, family historians and album makers orient

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themselves towards a “mnemonic response,” as Susannah Radstone quotes the words of Andreas Huyssen, in describing “a turning away from modernity’s faith in progress.”\(^{12}\)

The three quotes beginning this chapter speak to these three ideas of sameness, change, and responses, and relate again to the layers of the whole of this project: Older forms of family history, gender-based roles of keeping family history, social behaviors concerned with identity, records, and recordkeeping—all bear the imprint of the past in the present lives of these practitioners. Circling about these attributes are also technological advancements that layer how family history is perceived, and how family historians and album makers wish their work to be perceived, within an “epidemiology of representations”\(^{13}\) or the disposition towards taking a particular cognitive path.\(^ {14}\)

**Differences Between Family Historians and Album Makers**

Within this framework, two areas in which the work of family historians and those of album makers continue to diverge are in their definitions of memory work itself as finite or infinite, and in their varying emphases on records either as identity or as evidence.

*Almost Finite versus Infinite Work*

Album makers make albums. Family historians gather family history. The differences between the two verbs “to make” and “to gather” tell the main difference between the practices of the two. Most simply put, album makers see their work in separate projects, as completions of separate albums. Though technology (new types of albums, and online

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scrapbooks) are changing this attitude, on the whole album makers see their legacies as finished at some point. Family historians see their work as never ending, as an ongoing process.

Less apparent are their different paths to memory work that come as a result of the conceptualization of work that continues and work that can end. Family historians “research”; album makers “find out.” Album makers see their work as closer in time, residing within the lives of their children, and not extending out beyond direct lines. The definition of usability for album makers is present-oriented. Their contexts, formats, and contents are dependent on the telling of their creators, whereas family historians’ files and copies go directly back to sources, and thus could extend forward to future users whoever they might be. In other words, “context control” is, from the outset of their creations or gatherings, less present for album makers than it is for family historians.

Identity/Evidence Split

Family historians concentrate on records as evidence, whereas album makers look to records for marks of identity, reading the self who looks for records, and less so ancestors, there. For family historians, genealogical “proof” requires sources, information, evidence—and analysis of all three. The record itself concerns proof, and thus a verifiable, evidential quality. As Joseph in Chapter One underscored, his most important learning was in “forming evidence for whatever I put down.” Family stories are all “good and fine,” but what one usually finds is that they “are untrue” or “slightly

15 Sue McKemmish, Barbara Reed, and Michael Piggott, “The Archives,” in Archives: Recordkeeping in Society, ed. Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward (Wagga Wagga, New South Wales: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, 2005), 170.
16 Mills, Evidence Explained, 24.
wrong, or misinterpreted.” Family historians work to prove or disprove private accounts, and all their work is oriented towards “building a case around what is in the records.”

Album makers look for something that connects to the trace of the personal. The handwriting of the album maker is always emphasized, deemed one of the tangible marks of identity.\(^{17}\) Album makers discuss software to convert one’s computer-generated text into a style imitating one’s own handwriting.\(^{18}\) Yet, album makers also were more willing to hold in their creations two or more opposing memory texts. About one section of her album, Yamilee noted:

I know that my great-grandmother’s mother, she’s from the islands, the Caribbean, from Saint Lucia. And I know her mother passed away in the fires. They always say “the fires.” And I did some research and found out that, like, in the ’40s there were massive fires in Saint Lucia. That a lot of people, like, lost homes and everything. But now here’s something that I like, this didn’t add up. They said she died in the fires. But the records say that no one died, actually in the fire.

She paused then continued “But that can just be reporting. You know, sometimes, they just say no one passed. Well, maybe they died two weeks later. So, you never know about that kind of stuff. And that’s something that—it could be that discrepancy, so I included it all.” What did she mean by the inclusion of “all,” as in “so I included it all?” In her heritage album she gave credence to both the official version and her own family’s understanding of their ancestor’s death. She preserved the narrative related to identity. But she also she created a record that shows the complexity of recordkeeping itself, especially in times of disasters.

**Commonalities Between Family Historians and Album Makers**

\(^{17}\) Lightle and Anderson, *The Creative Memories*, 17.

Despite these differences, among the two groups, there is an ethos of sharing, not so different from the civility noted in the quotation with which this chapter began, and not so different than the hospitality of the story of Miho Baccich in Chapter Seven. “A treasure for a genealogist to behold is a family album, a scrapbook, or even a box of pictures.”19 Similarly, family historians are often the starting point for album makers. 20 This commonality has to do with their beliefs that all work on family history adds to a collective project on various families. The second commonality—and the one most critical for archivalization—concerns their willingness towards, and skills with, technology.

The Bigger Picture: The Collective Nature of Family History

In both large and small ways, family historians and album makers present an optimistic belief that presenting the past is a valuable legacy. Genealogical pursuits are noted as being “good for the family,” for “helping us to remember where we have come from” and “uniting us with others.” Such comments reflect the emphasis pervasive in many quarters (not just in family history) on family, on the worry that families are not together enough, and that migration, divorce, and other social factors have ripped families apart. For family historians and album makers, their memory work is the best way to combat this concern. They see patterns in the past that make the dissolution of the family in the present seem part of a larger design, and they reunite families in files and albums.

They also believe that records themselves are never isolated from other records.

This is a pragmatic as well as a strategic concern: multiple records are needed to

20 Braun, Crafting Your Own Heritage Album, 16.
document fully any one life, and family historians and album makers—by sharing their works—ensure that various individually perceived legacies have a greater chance of survival. Sharing can be in the future. “A record that doesn’t quite fit within the pattern may yet be used later. “At some point,” a number of family historians said, “someone will take up this work.” For album makers, community ownership of the albums, “should anything happen” is a central theme; and for family historians, membership in a group ensures that the work (if not the proposed but rarely completed book) will go to the group, a repository, or someone in the family.

The two groups also share in a belief that all people need some hobby or pastime, and that this particular one in family history has benefits that far exceed other activities. They think of their memory work as “a thinking” pastime, with people who are basically drawn to groups—social beings who enjoy being together. The group members assist one another in myriads of ways outside family history: in celebrations, in sicknesses, and in day-to-day collegiality. Helping strangers, again xenia, is also part of this ethos. Such connections result in “more pieces to the puzzle,” a “richer life,” and some indefinable quality that “brings good karma.” Four family historians and three album makers told stories of records coming to them when they had given up all hope of finding documentation. Amazingly, someone, completely unknown, appeared to help them solve a problem. Similarly, two told of books and records suddenly “right before my eyes” or arriving in the mail unrequested. They attribute these gifts to their own generosity to others.

*Technology*
All album makers but one believed themselves to be proficient in new technologies (digital photography, scanning, various software packages, computer back-ups, email, and other social networking applications). All but seven family historians considered themselves adept and skilled in microfilm, software packages, databases, online searching, and email.

More importantly, both groups recognize that large portions of their work would not be possible without the technologies of printing, photography, and electronic resources. The dates of technological changes touching family history have much to say to archivists. The first great popularization of family history of the twentieth century (1970–1999) coincided with greater access to microfilmed records and later to electronic databases. The birth of the current scrapbooking craze (1995–present) ran concurrently with the expansion of the scanning technologies, digital photography, and digitally presented records online. What this did was to allow the development not only of the networks of family history work, the huge increase in the numbers of these researchers who might never come to archives, but also the growth of private or personal archives. Family historians and album makers are on the frontlines of these new endeavors, interpreting the past for family members first and then concurrently with schools, newspapers, films, online sources, and other outside purveyors of various memory texts.

Some bring creative means of juggling the materiality of the past, and in ensuring its management. Consider Ingrid (b. 1940), who talked of an album of digital photographs made about her daughters’ bedrooms, documenting the bedrooms before she dismantled them to make the rooms serve another purpose. She also made other albums to document artifacts, furniture, previous owners’ names, and dates of their lives:
I realized I had a lot of pieces that were from members of the family ... I decided well, I’ll photograph all those things too. So now I have these two gigantic binders … of photographs of these belongings…. And I put the date of the birth and the date of the death of the person [to whom the object belonged], so there’s no doubt, no confusion. I used their name rather than great-grandmother sort of thing.

Furniture, kitchen equipment, jewelry all function as living memories, while the photographs function as archival memory. Not many people would have had time for this when Ingrid completed her project in 1999, but with today’s digital photography and software packages, more such efforts will be possible and will be completed.

Archival Roles in Shaping Collective Memories

Archivists need to consider how family historians and album makers could choose to link such works to public records. Another consideration for archivists should be simply but profoundly the need for acquisition of knowledge about how such personal archives are managed and their meanings to individuals and groups.

Considering these differences and commonalities, how might archivists have an even more active role in being one of the voices at the table of dynamic memory, in assisting in the development of circumstances that aid more actively in the transmission and pluralization of records? Changes could be made in three areas: in archival education, archival programs, and within the profession of archivists.

Changes to Archival Education

First, an understanding of family history should be required in archival education. At present, the study of family history records and other forms of personal record keeping are available in a concentrated fashion only through a few universities within librarianship programs at Emporia State University in Kansas, and within the joined
archival and librarianship programs at the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of British Columbia (UBC), and Kent State University. At present, there are also aspects of genealogy needs interwoven into existing courses on access. One such course at the University of North Carolina is “Access, Outreach and Public Service in Cultural Heritage Institutions,” and it involves “a guest speaker who is training to be a professional genealogist, discussion of articles on genealogical research, and in-class activity where … students practice doing searches in the census, ellisisland.org, and the online Sanborn maps collection.” There is also an online course taught through the Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association. The most ambitious program is offered via the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information in conjunction with the Canadian National Institute for Genealogical Studies. The program also has the support of the Association of Record Managers and Administrators (ARMA), Ontario Library Association, Special Library Association, and a consortium of Canadian libraries involved in other shared learning experiences called “SmartLibrary.” This Certificate in Genealogical Studies, specifically for librarians, is awarded to those who complete “reading materials, case studies, assignments, a final exam and the opportunity to interact online with the instructor.” The courses (like the combined subjects of topics at Emporia State, the two University of Wisconsin campuses, Kent State, and UBC) involve reference work; identification and development of services; a core collection; finding aids, brochures and online and multimedia instructional tools; Internet searches; record types; cooperative ventures and

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21 Amber Cushing, Doctoral Student at the School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, email to author, February 27, 2009.
referrals; developing a genealogy home page; and programming and marketing. Since the program can be completed online, it is open to many different people, and, according to several people on the Librarians Serving Genealogists Listserv (Genealib), popular throughout North America.

What one notices about these courses, however, is that they generally fall under the rubric of librarianship, even when many of the schools have an archives track. The UBC course, like the Toronto certificate, concentrates on “a practical knowledge of key genealogical resources” and the exploration of “collection development, the reference interview, and library-based genealogy programming.” The instructor’s impression is that the course “leaned towards librarianship” even though it was offered as part of a “joint program” for library and archival students. The course is called “Genealogy for Librarians.” Yet, the questions the courses pose are also of interest and especially relevant to archivists. This structuring of courses also is a holdover from the past, the alignment of archivistics with the history profession. Genealogy’s placement mainly in library studies is an odd configuration, given that family historians use records more than books. This should be changed.

Enhanced Archival Programs

With an education about family history records and family history use of archives, archivists would be more interested in shaping their professional work towards

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23 Audra Eagle, email to author, February 25, 2009; Sarah Kirby, email to author, February 25, 2009; Tracy Luscombe, email to author, February 25, 2009; Janet Tompkins, email to author, February 23, 2009.
25 Janet Tompkins, Instructor, UBC Genealogy for Librarians, email to author, February 27, 2009.
innovative programs that join family history in projects that create collective memory, that place records in the eyes and ears of so many today via technology. Chris Hurley and Barbara Reed have suggested some models that would address varied researchers as contributors and partners in the transmission of records. Hurley discusses the collaborative model of “online banking systems” constituted by “both organization and customer simultaneously but representing significantly different viewpoints.” Speaking of all records and their representations, he argued for inclusion of various accounts of records creation and records use from multiple standpoints in description of records. In addition, Hurley and Reed both provide insight into mutually beneficial arrangements with small groups that could be copied in similar ventures with family historians and album makers, such as electronic spaces shared between groups and repositories. Album makers and family historians already work in such spaces via various photo-sharing sites. Archives could offer similar preservation and access, with custody shared or specifically allotted. This type of arrangement would mean another type of outreach that would link, for example, digitized public records with private records maintained on other websites by family historians and album makers on their website. A model might be the Dutch Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie which allows entering a surname to gain information not only on their collections, but also on connections to family associations and other records. In these ways, the layers of materials, the public and private

26 Reed (“Beyond Perceived Boundaries,” 183, no. 13) cites a conversation with Hurley on this topic in a seminar.
interchange of ownership and the influence of interests are shown as part of shared knowledge.

Reed concludes that archivists should make an “active examination” of pluralization itself. She asks for more contextual information in classifications and descriptions, priority statements linking appraisal decisions to point of capture, and new legislation giving people access to records about themselves.\(^{30}\) Her suggestions remind of past and present activities, set together, drawing on traditional and futuristic trends. To learn from the past, one could draw on the findings of Eric Ketelaar who demonstrated that the value of archives as a patrimony was located initially within the private sphere of families.\(^{31}\) In the present column, there are innovative projects allowing users to add to digitized collections, such as the Polar Bear Project at the University of Michigan.\(^{32}\) Might we then ask if family history, so much of which make up the private archives of today, could lead in helping archivists thinking of how to shape new programs? Recall the surprise that greeted those family historians who contributed to the Library of Congress website, mentioned in Chapter Two.\(^{33}\)

A recent study of the use of Web 2.0 by archives found few other repositories using these “latest generation” of applications that allow “users to create, interact with, and share information.”\(^{34}\) While many repositories have blogs, podcasts, Flickr connections, and Facebook pages, they are lacking in sites that allow work alongside archivists to add knowledge of collections to sites. There are economic reasons for this

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 189–193.
\(^{31}\) Ketelaar, “Muniments and Monuments,” 343, 354; idem, “The Genealogical Gaze.”
\(^{33}\) Graham, “Tales from the Vault.”
hesitation, of course, but policies and pilot projects could be more actively begun. Album makers were particularly interested in interactive sites that would let them use their expertise and link private records to a larger history, though many did not see this history as located through libraries and archives. Yet archivists have a ready audience in album makers who are used to receiving announcements via websites and email. A simple announcement of the holdings of scrapbooks, for example, linking historic scrapbooks in repositories to contemporary online scrapbooks or vendor sites could be one approach.

Family historians also have knowledge of records that they are already adding to websites. Even beginning an online chat about these sites would be a start in allowing family historians “into the archives” as co-creators of ideas about future use.

Another achievable model for album makers and family historians might be the “suitcase” technology that allowed immigrant groups in the Netherlands to record their (audio and visual) memories and then to deposit their archives into the city repository. Such a suitcase could allow album makers to add materials from their crop sessions. On a smaller scale, a digital scrapbook project created by communication scholars showed the desire of participants in a research study to keep both an electronic and a paper copy of albums. Beth M., the blogger above, would see her own ideas in this project, and indeed this choice is already offered many scrapbook makers today by such companies as Heritage Makers. These electronic scrapbooks could easily be shared with archives,

with their continuing preservation and migration to new technologies as the work and responsibility of the repository. Archives could also assist in establishing standards and calendars for these sorts of preservation projects. Archival standards for digital copies, though discussed in album making and family history communities, are rarely achieved.

Changing Professional Roles

Yet a more radical change could be in the involvement of more archivists in popular history, especially in televised programs. The British, Australian, and Canadian show *Who Do You Think You Are*, in which celebrities’ searches for ancestors are shown, will be transformed for American audiences in 2009. Other programs, like *African American Lives* that grew into the book *Oprah’s Roots*, and various episodes on the History Channel that use archivists as guides, are also good models.

An expanded role for archivists could be found in other types of programs, as well. On the model of “Book TV” where already scheduled programs in bookstores, university classrooms, book fairs, and such venues are presented every weekend, archivists could work with others in the cultural sector to tape educational and professional programs and see that they are broadcast each week, either on television or some online source such as YouTube. Then the archival community could have a part in defining most simply the definition of the word “archives” and more complexly, records used by family historians. The interest of others now in records via the mediating role of technology is high and many scholars claim that televisions offer “the principal means by

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38 *Who Do You Think You Are?*, documentary, directed by Christopher Bruce (Los Angeles, CA: Is or Isn’t Entertainment and Wall to Wall Productions, forthcoming 2009).

which most people learn about history.” As Laura Bear found in her study of Indian genealogies, “We need to see archives as active institutions that bring certain people and communities into specific relationships with the documentary past in ways that help to shape experiences of belonging and citizenship.” She was looking backwards at historical records, but just as important is the view of an active archives in the present.

These appearances and writings could be supplemented with an advisory role to private archives, as well, not just those in grand houses but in living rooms, television rooms, and so forth. This advisory role could be familiar ones—teaching about records use, maintaining tutorials on websites, and educating archivists and librarians to help family history users. Some of this innovative work is being done now. Just during the last five years, the National Archives and a number of other repositories have enlarged their websites to do such teaching, but archivists could also do this on a one-to-one basis, providing freelance archival support or services through archives for a fee, much as genealogists are now connected with archives. Peter Van Garderen praised the work of a group called Data Portability.org, doing just that. MyLifeBits project from Gordon Bell also shows ways that home archives will be managed.

The conversation of collective memories would then be more consistently placed to include discussions of context, custodianship, interpretation, and the symbolic creation of a large archives that is not held in one place, yet ensured collectively as a legacy for future generations. Archivists could provide some of the vocabulary we have already articulated for theoretical consideration of records. Our context, especially the archival bond, the “custodial bond,” and the interpretive cast we see in records use, could be explained and suggestions could be made about how family history work mirrors these other bonds. It is this advice that archivists need to present to the world.

Future Study

Much more work could be done to learn about how family history influences processes of collective memory, living memory, and archives. Comparative studies of genealogy in varying cultures (one religion to another, one country to another, one continent to another) could teach us about different stances towards authority, gender, conformity, and uncertainty avoidance, to take categories studied by Geert Hofstede. Are records used as often in genealogies where heretofore they have been instruments of oppression? Does a society schooled in Buddhism believe that it would be noble to forego the legacy of family records? Could a society that encourages children to know their ancestors through records become a more peaceful society as many heritage album makers have suggested? Does a more pluralized society set the framework of access to family history differently than does a more autocratic or hegemonic society? Another

46 Cox, Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling, 167–200.
47 A comparative study was begun in 2002 by the International Council on Archives, Committee on Outreach and User Services, but the committee was disbanded in 2004. See papers presented as part of the Family History Migration, and Reading Room tools, International Council on Archives meeting, Vienna, August 24, 2005: Daniela Ferrari, “Recherches des données anagraphiques des italiens émigrés,” (15th International Conference on Archives: Archives, Memory and Knowledge, Vienna, August 23–29, 2004), and Tucker, “Visible Enough to Us?”
avenue of inquiry could involve learning if interests in family history have or have not
grown with more open access to records, collecting policies, and other aspects of
contemporary rights to access and privacy.

Finally, much more could be done in understanding and demonstrating the forms
of records used in family history. A mapping project tracing the material culture of
family history over selected decades in selected locales would make for a website of
interest to many memory practitioners and to funding bodies. At present, family
historians and album makers have such websites themselves, in part. The privately
created and maintained website showing painted family registers is one example of what
is already being done. Archives and libraries could either link to such projects or enter
into an agreement with individuals to help them expand such public information.

What is important now is not to miss this continuing technological revolution,
now flowing in private archives every day on websites, at family reunions, at
genealogical meetings, and at crop sessions. From such gatherings, many archivists could
come to an understanding of far-reaching and dynamic professional roles.

**Concluding Remarks**

All of these changes should be addressed in order to turn “differences” between
archivists and memory practitioners of all sorts “into assets rather than barriers.”
Again, there is the return to the layers within our own profession, its division from family
history, but also the very real knowledge that archivists can bring to seeing this form of
public history. Are not our own beginnings located similarly in some environment that
nurtured an interest in records of the past on a shelf or in a box?

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48 Vandergriff and Vandergriff, “Records and Registers.”
What has been learned here is that family historians and album makers connect with the past, and collect memories in some form that will be passed to future generations. To do so they come to oral and written accounts with an interest that is nurtured by themselves and by others. Gender and migration have influenced these processes, but boundaries of these sorts are constantly being redefined. In other words, archivalization is cultivated by social forces and available technology—always evolving forms in themselves, and thus dynamic processes. Work on records, in turn, involves research and creativity; it also involves standards of evidence and preservation as prerequisites for legacies of identities. Work on these records also involves daily practices of memory transformed into simple housekeeping tasks, naming practices, observations of holidays, and other temporal adjustments. Records, technologies, and living practices mediate and construct the work of family history. Transmission of memory traces is ongoing, but not always visible. Transmission of records is a part of this transmission of memory, inseparable from it but also complexly situated on different paths.

The family historians and album makers do not say it this way, of course. They say rather that they are looking for “the bigger picture,” which they interpret as “wholeness” that has to do with the past and the present, crafted for the future. They seek, as the novelist E. M. Forster added to his similar declaration, to “live in fragments no longer”\(^50\); they seek this often times feverishly through records.

Salman Rushdie in his essay, *Imaginary Homelands* adjusts some desire for wholeness to another explanation. He writes:

Human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to death.\footnote{Salman Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands,” in \textit{Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991} (London: Granta 1991), 13.}

Records literally are the debris, the remnants of the past, which Rushdie, Forster, and other writers claim as metaphorically representing life, and especially memory of life. An expanded definition of transmission attends to the fact that archivists should be experts in such memory work and therefore should be ready to learn from the most public of all history practiced by people interested in their families. For this reason, archival rules and policies governing transparency about the context of creation and various movements of the passage to and possibly from an archives should themselves be transparent to all potential users of records. In this dissertation, these layers (or generations of uses) of records and settings (or circumstances) involved in locating memories lead to an expanded definition of transmission understood as “reaching beyond ... boundaries,” rather than “patrolling them.”\footnote{Verne Harris, “Against the Grain: Psychologies and Politics of Secrecy,” (paper, The Philosophy of the Archives Conference, University of Dundee and Edinburgh, April 2008).} The archival role requires assistance, learned from family historians and album makers, in building the edifice of the whole of memory as less shaky, as indeed built-to-be-built-upon.
APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRES

I. Questions for Family Historians

A. Background of the Participant
   1. Please tell me your name.
   2. Please tell me where and when you were born.
   3. Please tell me where you have lived and where you now live.
   4. Please tell me about your education.
   5. What other kinds of work do you do? How do you see these other kinds of work as fitting with family history?

B. General Questions about Work with Family History
   6. How much of your week is spent doing family history?
   7. How and when did you decide to begin pursuing family history?
   8. Describe what you first did to get started. (Probe: What books did you first use? What software programs, if any did you first use? Who offered you advice? From whom did you seek advice?)
   9. Did you read any of the suggestions for beginning that are found online? (Where were these beginning suggestions found?)
   10. What individuals or experiences had the strongest effect in beginning and continuing with family history?
   11. What did you know about your ancestors before you began researching them?
   12. What sorts of written or photographic documents existed about your ancestors?
   13. Who had these documents? Where did they keep them?
   14. How did you learn about these documents?
   15. In general, some of the publications on family history that I have seen begin with the statement that every family has its own historian, someone who keeps family records. Can you tell me what you think about this statement and also how this plays out in your own family? (If necessary, probe for both extended family and interviewee’s immediate family. Ask, if not answered, In general, is this person more likely to be a woman or a man?)
   16. Tell me what is important to you about knowing your ancestors and finding documents about them. (Probe: Describe your reactions when you have found records. What’s your typical reaction when you find someone for whom you’ve searched?)
17. What sort of projects are you currently working on? (If not included in answer ask, Can you tell me about a typical problem you had with family history and how you resolved it? Tell me how the project came into being and what you did, or are doing, to complete the project.)

18. How do you feel about the results you achieved with various projects? How do you think others perceived the results? What did you do with the final product?

19. When do you consider a project finished? When it is finished, what is the next step? How many people are involved in this step?

C. Processes and Practices

20. How would you describe the process of beginning family history particularly the locating of sources? What did you know about sources before you began? What have you learned recently about sources that surprised you? How do you verify the information you find?

21. How would you describe the process of documenting what you find? What does this documenting involve for you?

22. How would you describe the way you present information you have found on your family to others?

23. At what points in the process do you interact with others? Who are these others? (Probe for family members, who they are, what sex, other genealogical researchers and also professionals, librarians, archivists, and genealogists).

24. How do you communicate with them?

25. What happens when you cannot find a document you need?

26. Do you use the Internet in your work? In what ways?

27. Do you visit libraries, archives, and courthouses in your work? Tell me about a visit to one of these that stands out in your mind.

28. Tell me about any travel you have done in association with family history.

29. Do you scan materials and if so, what sorts? What do you do with scanned materials?

30. Tell me about use of a flash drive or memory stick? Do you use an external hard drive?

31. What sort of software do you use now to help with family history work?

32. What family history materials do you take with you when you evacuate for a hurricane?

33. What do you do with the materials you leave behind?

34. Do you ever give materials to others? If so, to whom do you give them?

35. Tell me what you know about giving family history materials to a library or archives? Have you considered giving materials to a library or archives?

36. Have you made arrangements for your materials when you can no longer keep them?

37. How would you say that your ideas about and practices of keeping memories about families has evolved over the past ten years?

38. Have these changes affected the sorts of family history you do or the products you make?

39. How do you feel that the transition to electronic documents and digitization of materials will affect records on families and family history?
39. Tell me (or show me) how your family history materials are organized now?
40. What kinds of family history activities do you engage in? (Tell me about any
work you have done with others active in genealogy.)
41. What do you see as the role of library and archives in your work?
42. What do you see as the role of the Internet in your work?
43. Can you tell me what you know about the rules governing access to
documents? Can you tell me about different rules of access? What do you think about
these rules?
44. Tell me about your understanding of DNA testing in learning about family
history.

D. Purpose and Vocabulary
45. What part do you feel family history plays in society?
46. What would you say is your primary mission in doing family history?
47. How does education about materials fit into this mission?
48. When you have all the information you need on one particular family
completed, would you describe that collection of materials as a document of a record?
Why would you describe it this way? (How do you define document? How do you define
records?)
49. What records should be kept by each family?
50. How would you define records that should be kept within a library or
archives?
51. What do you see as the most important aspects of the materials you collect?
52. What do you value most in the materials you collect?
53. How do you decide what to keep and what not to keep?
54. How do you decide what to give to other family members?
55. How do you decide what materials should be donated to a library or archives?
What records about families do you think should remain only private? Are there records
that shouldn’t be in libraries or archives?
56. How do you decide what materials should be added to a website?
57. How would you say that ideas about family history have evolved over the past
ten years?
58. Have these changes affected the sorts of projects you undertake?
59. What types of situations make family history difficult?
60. What types of situations make family history rewarding?

II. Questions for Heritage Album Makers

A. Background of the Participant
1. Please tell me your name.
2. Please tell me where and when you were born.
3. Please tell me where you have lived and where you now live.
4. Please tell me about your education.
5. What other kinds of work do you do? How do you see these other kinds of
work as fitting with family history?
B. General Questions about Work with Albums

6. How much of your week is spent making scrapbooks?

7. How and when did you decide to begin making scrapbooks?

8. Describe what you first did to get started. (Probe: What books did you first use? What software programs, if any, did you first use? Who offered you advice? From whom did you seek advice?)

9. Did you read any of the suggestions for beginning that are found online? (Where were these beginning suggestions found?)

10. What individuals or experiences had the strongest effect in beginning and continuing with scrapbook making, especially in making heritage albums?

11. What did you know about your ancestors before you began researching them?

12. What sorts of written or photographic documents existed about your ancestors?

13. Who had these documents? Where did they keep them?

14. How did you learn about these documents?

15. In general, some of the publications on family history that I have seen begin with the statement that every family has its own historian, someone who keeps family records. Can you tell me what you think about this statement and also how this plays out in your own family? (If necessary, probe for both extended family and interviewee’s immediate family. Ask, if not answered, In general is this person more likely to be a woman or a man?)

16. Tell me what is important to you about knowing your ancestors and finding documents or memories about them. (Probe: Describe your reactions when you have found records or heard stories. What’s your typical reaction when you find someone for whom you’ve searched?)

17. What sort of projects are you currently working on? (If not included in answer ask, Can you tell me about a typical problem you had with family history or album making and how you resolved it? Tell me how the project came into being and what you did, or are doing, to complete the project).

18. How do you feel about the results you achieved with various projects? How do you think others perceived the results? What did you do with the final product?

19. When do you consider a project finished? When it is finished, what is the next step? How many people are involved in this step?

C. Processes and Practices

20. How would you to describe the process of beginning a heritage album particularly the locating of sources? What did you know about sources before you began? What have you learned recently about sources that surprised you? How do you verify the information you find?

21. How would you describe the process of documenting what your find? What does this documenting involve for you?

22. How would you describe the way you present information you have found on your family to others?

23. At what points in the process do you interact with others? Who are these others?
family historian (who they are and their sex) and also professionals (librarians, archivists, and genealogists)).

23. How do you communicate with them?
24. What happens when you cannot find a document you need?
25. Do you use the Internet in your work? In what ways?
26. Do you visit libraries, archives, and courthouses in your work? Tell me about a visit to one of these that stands out in your mind.
27. Tell me about any travel you have done in association with family history.
28. Do you scan materials and if so, what sorts? What do you do with scanned materials?
29. Tell me about use of a flash drive or memory stick? Do you use an external hard drive?
30. What sort of software do you use now to help with family history work?
31. What do you take with you when you evacuate for a hurricane?
32. What do you do with the materials you leave behind?
33. Do you ever give materials to others? If so, to whom do you give them?
34. Tell me what you know about giving family history materials to a library or archives? Have you considered giving materials to a library or archives?
35. Have you considered giving materials to a library or archives?
36. How would you say that your ideas about and practices of keeping memories about families has evolved over the past ten years?
37. Have these changes affected the sorts of family history albums you make?
38. How do you feel that the transition to electronic documents and digitization of materials will affect records on families and family history?
39. Tell me (or show me) how your family history materials are organized now?
40. What kinds of family history activities do you engage in? (Tell me about any work you have done with others active in genealogy.)
41. What do you see as the role of library and archives in your work?
42. What do you see as the role of the Internet in your work?
43. Can you tell me what you know about the rules governing access to documents? Can you tell me about different rules of access? What do you think about these rules?
44. Tell me about your understanding of DNA testing in learning about family history.

D. Purpose and Vocabulary
45. What part do you feel making albums about your family plays in society?
46. What would you say is your primary mission in making family albums?
47. How does education about materials fit into this mission?
48. When you have your heritage album completed, would you describe what you have as a document of a record? Why would you describe it this way? (How do you define document? How do you define records?)
49. What records should be kept by each family?
50. How would you define records that should be kept within a library or archives?
51. What do you see as the most important aspects of the materials you collect?
52. What do you value most in the materials you collect?
53. How do you decide what to keep and what not to keep?
54. How do you decide what to give to other family members?
55. How do you decide what materials should be donated to a library or archives?
What records about families do you think should remain only private? Are there records that shouldn’t be in libraries or archives?
56. How do you decide what materials should be added to a website?
57. How would you say that ideas about family history have evolved over the past ten years?
58. Have these changes affected the sorts of projects you undertake?
59. What types of situations make heritage album making difficult?
60. What types of situations make heritage album making rewarding?
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**Websites and Other Electronic Resources**


Television Productions, DVDs, and online interviews


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