

23 Tips for Writing a Family History

Author David Bowles shares 23 tips he wishes he had known when he started researching and writing his family history.

San Antonio, TX (PRWEB) August 29, 2006 -- David Bowles researched his family history for years before he started to write *The Westward Sagas*, a series of novels about his ancestors. Although the stories are consistent with known history, he is writing the books as fiction to include dialogue and to fill in the gaps in the historical records. Book 1: *Spring House* is currently available from Plum Creek Press, Inc. at <http://www.westwardsagas.com>. Book 2: *Adam's Daughters* will be released in 2007.

Bowles said, "I could have saved myself a lot of time if I had known more about writing a family history before I started."

Based on his experience, he has developed a list of 23 tips to help others get started researching and writing their own family histories.

1. Begin by determining your purpose. Is your goal to pass on the family heritage to your descendants? Or do you want to reach a wider audience? Do you want to write just the known facts, or would you prefer to write the story as fiction to fill in the gaps?
2. Decide on your focus. Your family tree has many branches, and you'll be most effective focusing on only one branch — or at least one branch at a time. As you gather information, you may change your focus based on what you learn, but you'll accomplish more if you have a focus.
3. Plan ahead for the publishing and marketing of your book. Be alert for contacts and opportunities for promotion as you research and write. Keep contact records of anyone who might be potential book buyers or who could help you publish and distribute your family history book. Even if you are publishing only for family members, include all the relatives you interview or come in contact with during your research.
4. Develop a system that works for you to organize information: a notebook with a page for each ancestor, a file box, computer files ... whatever is easy for you to use.
5. Get a small tape recorder you can use for interviews so you can enjoy the conversation without worrying about taking good notes.
6. Make copies of valuable documents as you research to preserve the originals.
7. Begin your research close to home. Interview your parents, grandparents, and other relatives and ask to research any family records they have available.
8. Take advantage of your public library and libraries in the areas where your ancestors lived. Many libraries have extensive genealogical departments with staff knowledgeable about the history and people of the region or state.
9. Join genealogical societies and historical associations in the locales you are researching. Even if you live too far away to participate in local meetings, you can access valuable records and dedicated genealogists who are familiar with the history of the region.

To read the other 14 tips, visit the author's blog: *Writing the Westward Sagas*, <http://westwardsagas.com/2006/08/28/23-tips-for-writing-a-family-history/>

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