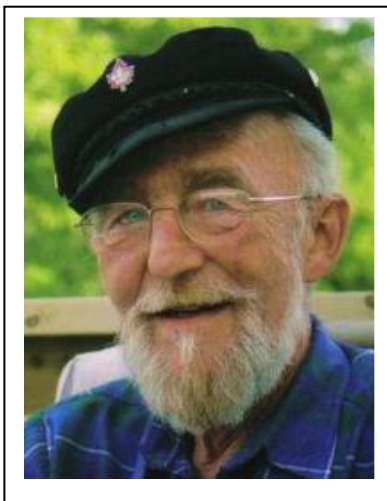


The Family Historian

Patrick Wohler

Column #51

Scrapbooking



In the late 19th and early 20th century scrapbooking was a popular pastime. People preserved their memories of their lives, friends, family, and important events by pasting letters, poems, photos, newspaper clippings, theatre tickets and other two dimensional ephemera into a scrapbook that was filled with inexpensive newsprint type pages.

Later, children got into the act. I still have three scrapbooks that I made up in the late 1940's and early 1950's. One of these was actually a school project, so it doesn't really count but the others were really mine. One of them is full of collector cards that came in bubble gum wrappers. I must have chewed an awful lot of bubble gum. The other shows another side of my personality and is full of clippings from the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, of fond memory.

Happily a number of early scrapbooks have been preserved and are in the collections of various archives, where their take on the life and times of the creator can bring a new dimension to Family History research.

The popularity of scrapbooks waned considerably after the 1950's but they burst upon the scene again in the 1990's. Scrapbooking has become an immensely popular hobby and a profitable industry. There are books, magazines, specialized suppliers, and, of course, numerous websites on the subject.

Many people will go to quite some lengths to make each page of their scrapbook a very attractive presentation. For them this is more a craft than a hobby.

What is of particular interest to us is the recent buzz about the marriage of scrapbooking and genealogy. A growing number of Family Historians use scrapbooking techniques to tell their family story. Some are not even aware that there is such a name for what they are doing.

One of the things that makes this feasible is the revolution in scrapbooking materials. You can now obtain acid-free paper, archival quality photo mounts, and conservation quality plastic sleeves, pens, and adhesives. If these materials are used, then we are really preserving our documentary heritage and not imperiling it as our ancestors sometimes unwittingly did.

Among the advantages of scrapbooking are the opportunity to use extensive captions for photos and documents, to use textual narrative where it belongs in the family story, and its portability. It can be taken to family gatherings and safely pored over by relatives who may have more interest in the visual material than in listening to stories about 'the old folks'.

From another practical point of view, it can serve as the essential core for the book you are going to write someday on your family's history.

If you have tried or are using these techniques, I would love to hear from you.

Translations

Frequently we need a few words translated and while, there are lots of language dictionaries on the internet, here is a site that I found interesting: <http://www.freetranslation.com>. The site actually belongs to a professional translating company but they do offer this service free.

It is very user friendly. You select the 'from' and 'to' languages, e.g. from German to English, from a drop down menu, then type in your word. At the bottom of the panel are little boxes of letters that are sometimes accented. Drop down the letter you want and you can select the accent you need.

I have tested the site several times and have had about 75% success in obtaining a satisfactory translation. Since these were tests, I either knew the correct answer or had a language dictionary on hand to verify the result. Where it did not work, they did not offer any translation. It was not that they made an error. They just did not have that word in their data bank.

This can be a useful tool for some of us and a fun toy for others.

I welcome comments, queries, and suggestions at: p_wohler@hotmail.com

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