



Starting With Stone Soup: Ideas For Crafting Your Ancestor's Story

by Sue Lisk

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FOND OF TURTLES. MAYBE that's why I felt a bit guilty when I learned that some of my ancestors in Quebec occasionally used this reptile from their "mud lake" as the chief ingredient in a certain soup they concocted.

I couldn't make up for the past. But I was interested in learning more about turtles in the present. So when I met Ed Murtagh, a naturalist who has created videos about turtles found in our area, I was anxious to view his clips. When discussing them, he revealed that most of the videos he'd produced up to now have had nothing to do with turtles, but rather with family history.

I'd like to take a look at one of these videos and use it as a springboard to suggest ideas you might consider when creating your own family history videos and related projects.



A turtle like this one occasionally ended up as an ingredient in a soup my ancestors prepared. A Northern map turtle in Ladysmith, QC. (Photo by Bob Bretzlaff)

"JOHN J. MURTAGH (GRAMP'S) STORY"



When you have just the outline of a story in photos, you can be creative as to how you present the details. A red-winged blackbird in silhouette against the sky. (Photo courtesy of author)

Ed Murtagh produced a relatively short video about his grandfather, John J. Murtagh, as a way of keeping his memory alive. He also wanted to share information about him of which younger family members would likely be unaware. You can view this video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H0mAVRVZwY.

Ed has made his video both accessible and engrossing by taking into account a number of important factors and by using effective tools to achieve his goal.

Identification

When creating a family history project for relatives or for others

who may be unfamiliar with the people involved, you'll want to be sure that the individuals in the story are clearly identified. Although it's often best to concentrate on one person, few stories about someone could be told as if the person lived in a vacuum. The individual you choose to focus on will usually be described at certain points in the context of how the person is related to or interacts with other family members, acquaintances, or friends.

As the narrator of the story, Ed Murtagh decided to specify his relationship to his grandfather, John J. Murtagh. This allows him to describe many of the