

FBC STUDY GROUP #1

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: PLANNING & RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

- Your hard work deserves to be seen, shared, and preserved. Honor it with this project.
- Our Goal: skills, practice, confidence – not “The Most Perfect, Complete, Family History Ever”
- FBC is a plug-in for Family Tree Maker, and it turns your tree into a book for you.
- This month, we are doing all the preparations and research so that when we sit down with FBC for the first time, everything we need is ready to go.

PHASE 1: PLANNING

WHAT HAS BEEN STANDING IN YOUR WAY?

- **STOP Researching** – You will never feel “done”. You need to pick a deadline (or follow mine!)
- **STOP Procrastinating** – There is always a reason to wait until next year.
- **STOP Overthinking** – Get out of your own way, and just get going.
 1. It doesn't have to be perfect ... it just has to be done.

4 DECISIONS TO MAKE

1. Pick a Printing Solution – Whether printing at home or through a company, you need to know what dimensions to use for your pages (e.g., 8x10” or 8.5x11”)
 - a. My favorite is Lulu.com, 11x8.5”.
2. Pick a Word Processor– that’s fancy for “computer program to type in.”
 - a. Microsoft Word is my favorite, or Google Docs is free.
3. Decide What to Include - Each chapter will have an immediate family chart and birth/marriage/death information. Will you want more types of facts? Photos?
4. Pick Your Couple – We are only writing about one couple for now (and their children)

PRINTING

PRINT AT HOME

You can always print the pages of your book yourself at home, and insert them into binders with the rest of your research. Purchase 3-hole-punched copy paper to save yourself some effort in that case.

1. This is simple, cumulative (you can print as you go), and it's easy to replace a single page.
2. But, it's also very time- and ink-consuming, and some people want a more polished look. It's also more difficult to make additional copies for family members.

"PRINT ON DEMAND" (POD) PROFESSIONAL PRINTING

Many book publishers will now publish single copies of a book – it used to be that you had to order 100+ copies to get a professional-looking book in your hands, but not anymore!

COSTS

Every publisher has its own pricing structure. Prices change according to page count, color or black & white printing, paper thickness, print quality, and the cover material. Here are some 2023 Lulu pricing examples (before tax and shipping):

1. 40 pages, 8.5x8.5", Standard Color, 60# paper, Paperback → \$4
2. 80 pages, 11x8.5", Premium Color, 80#, Hard Cover → \$26
3. 150 pages, 11x8.5", Premium Color, 80#, Hard Cover → \$40
4. 300 pages, 11x8.5", Prem. Black & White, 80#, Spiral-bound Soft Cover → \$22

If you have images in your book, you should really choose Premium printing (whether color or black & white) and 80# paper, to carry the ink properly.

CLEANING YOUR TREE IN FTM

A clean tree produces a clean book. Consider tidying up:

1. Citations
 - a. Add missing ones
 - b. Add images/document scans to existing citations
 - i. Find primary sources to shore up secondary ones (e.g., "Aunt Marge told me he was born in 1890, so I'll look up 1890 baptisms in the church records.")
 - c. De-duplicate

- d. Separate alternate facts & their citations (optional)
2. Fields
 - a. Clean up Description fields and make them consistent
 - i. e.g., “92 Age: 92” from Web Merges, or listing godparents for baptisms
 - b. Consolidate duplicate facts, especially names and birthdates
 - c. Ensure capitalization is consistent (e.g., John SMITH or John Smith)
 - d. Resolve Place Names
 - i. Back up and sync to Ancestry in small doses to avoid data corruption
 - e. Add color coding for the relevant families
 3. Content
 - a. Set profile pics
 - b. Add photos and documents you have collected elsewhere
 - c. Find missing records (e.g. 1950 US Census)
 - d. Process hints (“leaves”)
 - e. Make sure all items have a consistent filename structure
 - i. I use **Year SURNAME, FirstNames – Source YearOfCollection**
 - ii. E.g. **1937 KRIER, Nic and Anna JEHLE fam - FR Clara, Nic, Anna, Alex BR Carl, Ernie, Bertha – Ancestry JohnDoe – 2023**

Keep moving. If cleaning your tree becomes a roadblock, skip it and move on.

Any book is better than no book.

PHASE 2: RESEARCH

DOCUMENTS

The more of these you add, the more interesting your book will be.

Remember:

- Look for original source images, not just the indexed data
- Only 20% of FamilySearch records have been indexed. You might have to really dig!

HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

- Birth/baptism records
- Death/funeral records
- Marriage records

- Census records (remember they are unreliable data)
- Newspaper mentions
- Naturalization records
- Passenger manifests
- Military draft cards
- Real estate records
- Wills/probate records
- Agricultural schedules
- School programs and report cards
- Funeral cards

INTERVIEWS

- Record it – video is best, but audio is still helpful
- Prepare questions ahead of time, group by topic
- Focus on open-ended questions (not yes/no)
- Convince them their life is worth sharing

IMAGES

Images are usually the most interesting part of a book to lay people. But be careful! Trying to include lots of images can slow the book's progress to a crawl.

1. *Simplest* – don't include them.
2. *Moderately simple* – include only wedding portraits or official family photos.
3. *Some work* – Include all family photos using FBC's photo album.
4. *LOTS OF WORK* – include photos alongside text as you write biographies.
 - a. Don't let this hold up your whole book!

DON'T FORGET:

1. Captions – make sure people know what they are seeing. Add these in FTM directly.
2. Copyright – make sure you have the right to use every image in your book.
 - a. Look for Creative Commons licenses.

FINDING FAMILY PHOTOS

- Genealogy websites, especially Ancestry & My Heritage (check for siblings!)
- Facebook groups for families or communities
- Distant cousins, especially descendants of the youngest child in the family

- DNA matches (start early & be patient)
- Local historical societies

PHOTOGRAPHING PRINTED PHOTOS

- Turn off flash, and look for indirect window light
- Clean, simple background, like white paper
- Hold phone/camera directly above the photograph
- Be still to avoid blur
- Back up all images on another device

IDENTIFYING MYSTERY PHOTOS

- Ask an elder family member
- Bring to a family reunion
- Use facial-recognition software
- Analyze clothing & hair styles to estimate a decade
- Post to regional Facebook groups

FINDING NON-FAMILY IMAGES

- Old paintings/postcards of the town or church
- Photos of old-fashioned items or ethnic clothing
- Photos of other houses in the same town
- Paintings of the ship they immigrated on
- Coat of Arms for the town or state
- Contemporary maps of the country
- Military uniforms
- Gravestones

IMAGES ARE AMAZING

But if they stop you from completing this project, they are not worth it.

CONCLUSION

- You can do this!
- Watch out for scope creep. Remember we are just working on ONE couple.
- Don't be perfect, and don't give up.

HOMEWORK

Try to have these done by our next meeting:

PLANNING

1. Install FTM if needed
2. Choose ONE couple
3. Choose dimensions & printing solutions
4. Decide what kind of facts and media you will include
5. Clean your FTM tree *for your couple and their children only*

RESEARCH

1. If applicable, collect & photograph or scan family photos for this couple's family
2. Collect documents (newspaper mentions, census records, etc.)
3. Label items with proper filenames and attach to people in FTM

EXTRA CREDIT

1. Collect supporting images and documents from the couple's town or birth country
2. Check non-indexed records for where they lived
3. Interview an elder family member or friend –
or have someone interview YOU!

QUESTIONS?

- www.facebook.com/liferememberedgenealogy
 - This way I can answer questions once and everyone can benefit from the information!
- Or info@rebeccashamblin.com if needed
- My book: *Leaving a Legacy: Turn Your Family Tree into a Family Book* and its companion workbook are available here in print and digital: <https://rebeccashamblin.com/product-category/how-to-books/>
 - They are not required for this study group! They just have more detailed explanations, examples, and screenshots than I can share in a presentation.