

Tips for Writing your Family's History to Tell Your Story in an Interesting and Memorable Way!

Writing your family history story can be one of the most exciting projects you can do. It can also be one of the most challenging. To help you, we have provided some tips and ideas. Keep in mind that these are suggestions and ultimately only you can make the decision to write your family story in a way that best describes the life of your ancestors. We hope these tips will help you create a story that your family and community will enjoy reading.

- 1) Before jumping into the writing of your story, do a little searching for any relevant information and/or documents, like letters, pictures, newspaper articles, and legal documents (birth, marriage, death certificates). Next, talk to family members. Sometimes other family members know important family details or stories and can help fill in the blanks or provide interesting pictures or artifacts that were previously unknown. Using these other resources can help get a full picture of the story you're telling, whether that is from other family, close friends, a library or historical society, or books or newspaper articles.
- 2) From here organize your gathered information into a story, which may include the settlers of your family and the generations that followed throughout the years. Use these documents as starting points for your story. As you think about things and stories write them down. If you are using a recorded interview as a source for your story, try to include the persons' tone and expression in the writing. Having an outline can be helpful.
- 3) Decide ahead of time the direction you want to go with your history. What main events would you like to be the building blocks of your story? Focus could be directed towards the original settlers of the homestead and any descendants who continue to live in the Township. However, your story may just be about your immediate family living in Gillies today. [Note: those who have moved out of the Township can be briefly mentioned, though they should not be the focus of your story]. While facts are important, avoid listing only dates and statistics. Weave a story, especially one you feel needs to be told!
- 4) Stay on Track. It's easy to get caught up in free writing with a topic as personal as your family's history, and very tempting to include every detail! So it's important to keep focused on the outline you have created in step 2. This can be done either by choosing a person, a couple or major event(s) as your central theme. Sometimes writing out opening and closing statements will help to keep your story focused and give it a structured flow as well.
- 5) Including depth by providing a rich context of your family's story will help keep readers interested while emphasizing Gillies' unique and interesting history! Some questions that may help include: What social context was affecting the earlier generations? What brought your family to Canada/Gillies? How were the first generation settlers affected by the countries they were leaving and how did it affect their settling into Northwest Ontario and Gillies? What was your family's contribution to the township of Gillies after they arrived? What were the social, economic or political influences of that time? Don't be afraid to discuss controversial issues, however, take care to not make unproven accusations or stories that may offend others. Creating an air of mystery can also be very enticing for readers. Try to avoid only writing out a family tree.

What Happens Once Your Story is Submitted?

Your family story will go to an editor who will read over your work and if necessary, prepare your story for submission into the Gillies Township 100th Anniversary History Book.

Your story may be edited for clarity and/or length and will be returned to you for your review of the edits prior to publication.

Please note: In case of discrepancy, the chief editor has the final say on what gets published in the book.

How to Submit a Typed Document in an Electronic File (preferred):

- 1) Must be saved in **Word** with standard **1" margins, single spaced**
- 2) **Do not use** special fonts, indents or special text alignments
- 3) Word count is a maximum **2500 words per family story**
- 4) Must use **Times New Roman font** in **size 12**
- 5) All pictures must be submitted in **jpeg format**
- 6) There is a maximum of **4 pictures per family** (please number them)
- 7) Use the following format in your typed document to indicate where you wish your numbered picture to go: **[insert picture # ___ here]**
- 8) Send story and pictures to: gillieshistory@hotmail.com

How to Submit a Handwritten Document and Pictures:

- 1) Handwriting must be legible so that someone may type it
- 2) There is a maximum of **4 pictures per family** (please number them)
- 3) Use the following format in your handwritten document to indicate where you wish your numbered picture to go: **[insert picture # ___ here]**
- 4) Drop story and pictures off at the Gillies Township Office. Place all the documents in an envelope with your name and phone number clearly marked on the outside. We will type your story and convert your pictures to an electronic format. You will be notified when you can pick your pictures up at the Township Office.

Need help with writing your story? Contact us at: gillieshistory@hotmail.com or leave your name and number with the Gillies Township Office at 807-475-3185 and we would be more than happy to assist you.