Begin with the known, work to the unknown

Step 1
Start with interviews or information from relatives and those who knew your ancestors

Step 2
Gather information from all available sources

- Census records
- Wills
- Deeds
- Photos
- Vital Records
- Newspapers
- City Directories
- Regional Histories
- Military and Pension Files
- Maps
- Websites
- Family Ephemera and Artifacts
- Letters, Diaries, Journals
- Immigration and Naturalization Records
- Cemetery Records and Tombstones
- etc.

Step 3
Create a timeline using the information above and develop a storyboard ("chapters" of the ancestors’ lives)

Step 4
Identify historical information to put ancestors into a context for the geographic location

- Wars
- Epidemics
- Elections and Political Events
- Changes of Geographic Boundaries
- Territories Becoming States
- Religious Events
- Medical Advances
- Economic Conditions
- Weather Events
- Blizzards
- Hurricanes
- Floods
- Tornadoes
- Draughts
- Meteor Showers
- Disasters
- Fires
- Earthquakes
- Regional Events
- Fairs, Expeditions, etc.
- Openings of Businesses
- Mass Migrations
- Discoveries
- Gold
- Creation of Landmarks, etc.
- Railroads
- Canals
- Harbors
- Etc.

Step 5
Combine the historical information with the ancestor’s timeline to get a picture of the possible inter-relationship.

Step 6
Write out the combination of history and family data to show how your ancestor may have been affected by the various events.

Step 7
Combine/save the information:
- Put into keepsake books for family members
- Create narrative programs for family and community
- Add to the “notes” section in your genealogy program
• Remember to clarify what is proven and what is speculation
• Use them to interest young folks in their (your) family history

Summary:
• Identify the record(s) of a particular ancestor and time period
• Research the geographic area
• Put these in context with the family
• Put it all in context with history
• Link it all to the rest of the person’s life

References for Effective Storytelling and Validating Stories

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