

# Telling your Family's Story with Oral History

Boston Stake Women's Conference

May 3, 2014

# Introduction

- Goals for this session
  - Share my experiences
  - Motivate
  - Discussion
  - Non-goal: thorough coverage of topic
- **Question: Your experiences?**
- Why am I teaching this session?



# Who are these people?

- Reinhold Johann Arlt, 1877 -1956
- James Frederick Lomas, 1843-1925
- Phebe Phylinda Stanley, 1854-1940
- Hyrum Parkin, 1854-1899
- Joseph William Plant 1830-1914
- Mary Ann Walker, 1848-1919
- Heber Oliver Robinson, 1904-1967
- DeVora Francis Parkin, 1911-1991
- Erna Frieda Arlt, 1909-1996
- Samuel Liniker Robinson, 1851-1908
- Elizabeth Thomas, 1853-1933
- Mary Anne Walker, 1848-1919
- Jost E. Madrian, 1935-
- Mary Cornelia Plant, 1884-1958
- John Henry Parkin, 1882-1943
- Anna Wegener, 1887 – 1991
- Reinhold Johann Arlt, 1877-1956
- Ernestine Auguste Schober, 1876-1963
- William Henry Robinson, 1879-1964
- Annie Lomas, 1878-1943
- Johann Ferdinand Arlt, 1833-1913
- Maureen Sylvia Robinson, 1939-2011
- Rosina Schober, 1840-1925
- Samuel Liniker Robinson, 1852-1908
- John Parkin, 1821-1885
- George Walker, 1810-?
- Catherine Lowe, 1815-?
- Herbert Madrian, 1908-1944
- August Karl Madrian, 1885-1945

# Turn the *heart* of children to their fathers...

5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

(Malachi 4:5-6)

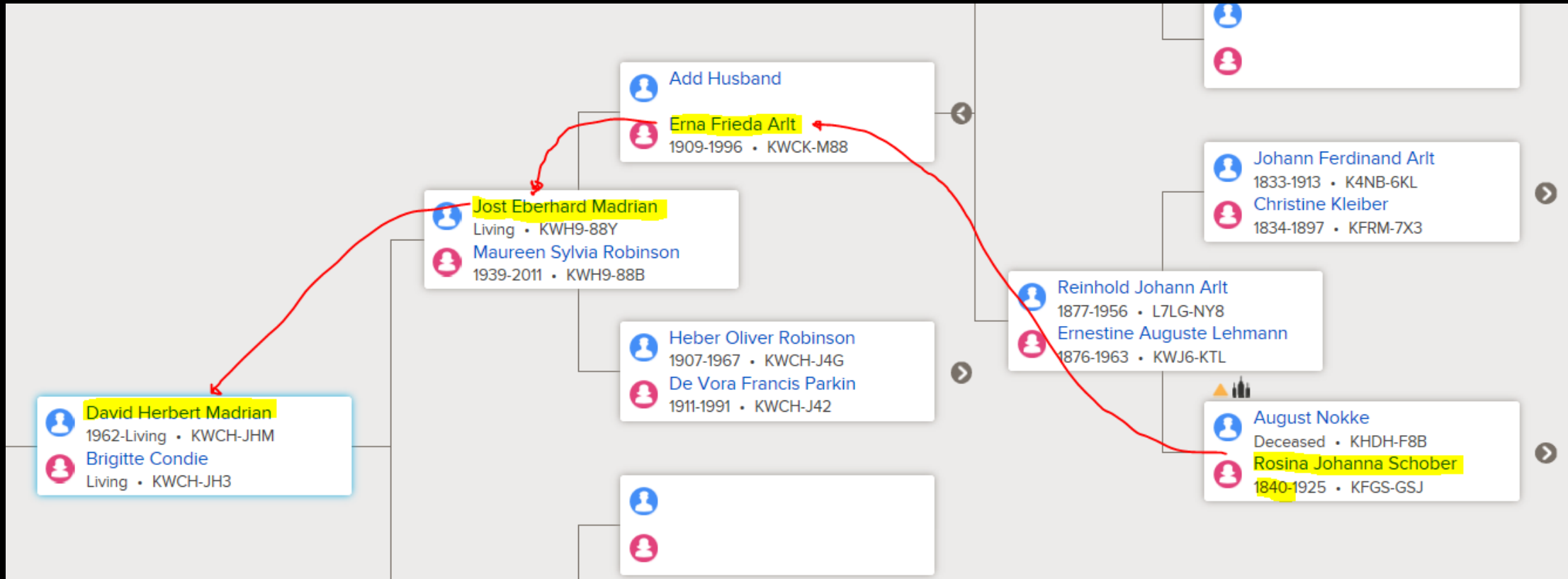
# Stories that connect us

“We all come from the past, and children ought to know what it was that went into their making, to know that life is a braided cord of humanity stretching up from time long gone, and that it cannot be defined by the span of a single journey from diaper to shroud.” (Growing Up, Russell Baker, pg. 8)

“...our families are the extension of ourselves back infinitely and forward infinitely. The antecedents of our actions go back to our ancestors--what they have done, what they have passed on to us in the way of sin and in the way of virtue. And the consequences of our actions go forward to our descendants. Both the antecedents and the consequences are, in fact, eternal--there is no beginning and there is no end to our actions. That is why we have to thank our ancestors (that is one side of it) and to forgive them (that is the other side of it); and why our children will have to thank us and forgive us.” (The Abundance of the Heart, Arthur Henry King 93)

# One connection: Rosina Schober (b. 1840)

VIDEO 1: INFLUENCES, 2 MIN



# What is oral history?

- Question: What is the essence of oral history?
- Preservation options
- Broader definition
  - Interview also
    - distant relatives,
    - friends,
    - younger relatives
  - Different recording venues



# Prepare

- Plan
  - Who to interview? Priorities?
  - Oral Historian's Anxiety Syndrome
- Content
  - Review questions ahead of time with interviewee.
  - Find the question they've wanted to answer their entire life
- Setting
  - Location (home, family reunion, trip, etc...)
  - Lighting, seating, phones, etc...
- Recording
  - Check with interviewee
  - Technical (quality worth the effort)
- *Better to do it unprepared than not at all.*

Subject Name(s)	Relation	Recorded By	Recording Date/Place	Topic
Werner Ranglack, Frieda Ranglack, Karin Madrian	Great Grandmother, Grandparents, Aunt	Werner Ranglack	16 Mar 1957/Berlin, Germany	
Werner Ranglack, Frieda Ranglack, Karin Madrian, , Ernestine Arlt	Grandparents and Aunt	Werner Ranglack	1 Jan 1958/Berlin, Germany	
William Henry Robinson	Great-Grandfather	Franklin Eddings	1959/Pocatello, ID	
William Henry Robinson	Great-Grandfather	Franklin Eddings	15 Sept, 1961/Bountiful, UT	
Grand parents, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends		Jost Madrian	November 1963 22 Mar 1964 24 July 1964 7 Mar 1965 14 Nov 1967 29 Feb 1967 30 Aug 1967 29 Jan 1968 Sep 1968 13 Oct 1968 29 Jan 1969 11 May 1969 25 Dec 1969 14 Nov 1971 July 1982 Etc...	
Jost Madrian	Father	David Madrian	School year 1976-77, SLC Utah	WWII
Jost Madrian	Father	Mark Madrian	School year 1978-79, SLC Utah	WWII
Jost Madrian	Father	Heidi Madrian	School year 1980-81, SLC Utah	WWII
DeVora Robinson	Grandmother	David Madrian	1986 – 1989 (10 interviews)	
Frieda Arlt Ranglack	Grandmother	Jost Madrian David Madrian	25 Jun 1989/Salt Lake City, UT 4 Mar 1991/Salt Lake City, UT 20 Jan 1992/Salt Lake City, UT 27 Oct 1994/Salt Lake City, UT 30 Dec 1993/Salt Lake City, UT 22 Aug 1994/Salt Lake City, UT 31 Dec 1994/Salt Lake City, UT 4 Sep 1995/Salt Lake City, UT	
Adelia Parkin Pippy	Grandma's sister	Maureen Madrian	13 Sep 1991/Salt Lake City, UT	
John Parkin	Grandma's brother	Maureen Madrian David Madrian	25 Aug 1995/Salt Lake City, UT	



# Art of the interview

- As the interviewer:
  - Be purposeful about capturing more than information
    - humor, personality, testimony, etc...
  - Be flexible: it's their story
  - Listen! (during interview, and to previous interviews)
  - Consider inter-personal dynamics
  - Retrospective vs. here and now
- Connect (have a real conversation)
- Reduce inhibitions
  - Many ways to do...it depends
- VIDEO 2: MORE THAN INFORMATION, 1 MIN



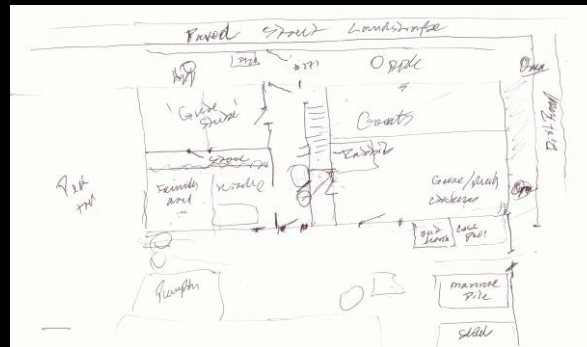
# Interview questions

- Holidays (Christmas)
- Typical days
- Food
- Health
- Work
- Favorite family stories
- Faith-promoting experiences
- Their parents, grandparents, etc.
- Non-direct ancestors



# Fun Ideas

- Discuss family photos
- Narrate home movies and videos
- House tour
- Draw and discuss floor plan
- Neighborhood tour
- Question: Others?
- VIDEO 3: GO ON LOCATION, 3 MIN



# *Connect* your family's story

- To historical events
- To your faith
- To your country
- To your culture
- To additional family members
- Etc...
- [VIDEO: 4. MAKE CONNECTIONS, 7 MIN.](#)





# Your role as historian

- What types of family histories are possible?
- Problems:
  - Stock stories
  - Idealized perspective
  - Exaggerations and inaccuracies
  - Family skeletons
- Your influence and responsibility?
  - Realistic history a strength
  - Fairness to deceased relatives
- VIDEO 5: FAMILY SKELETONS, 4 MIN.
- Discussion



# Share

- Blogs
- Mobile devices
- Hard drives project
- Videos (examples today)

## Parkin, Robinson, Madrian, and Arlt Family History Blog

*A site dedicated to sharing our family's history with each other.*



← DeVora Parkin Robinson Oral History, Tape 4

DeVora Parkin Robinson Oral History, Tape 2 →

### DeVora Parkin Robinson Oral History, Tape 3

Posted on [January 30, 2011](#)



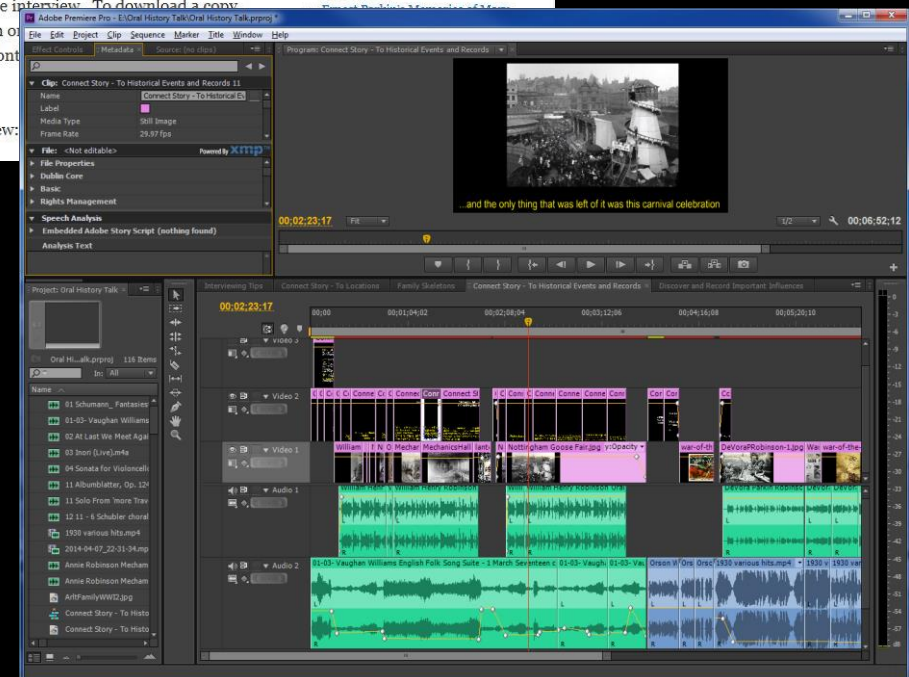
Click on the player above to hear an audio recording of the interview. To download a copy of the audio as an mp3 file (to listen to on an iPod or burn onto a CD), click on the following link and click "Save Target As..." from the context menu.

[Robinson Oral History Tape 3](#)

Below are photos that relate to the content of this interview:

#### Recent Posts

- Robinson Family Reunion Family Recording: July 3, 2013
- Maureen Robinson Madrian's Oral History
- Ernest Robinson Madrian's Oral History



# Preserve

- Make backups!!!!
- Obsolete technology
- Digital enhancement
  - Always keep originals
- Transcribe and print





# Resources

- Extensive information available on-line
  - Interview Questions
  - Oral history is a discipline with an extensive literature
  - Repositories of oral history
- Two recommendations
  - [https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Creating\\_Oral\\_Histories](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Creating_Oral_Histories)
  - [http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)





# Conclusions

- Take little time and create something priceless.
  - Even simplest effort worthwhile
- Eternal relationships



# Questions and (hopefully) Answers

