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ChatGPT

500-word explanation of how AI can assist family history writers, and here's what it came up with.

Using ChatGPT in Family History Writing

Family history writing is a rewarding yet challenging endeavor that requires extensive research, organization, and storytelling skills. ChatGPT can be an invaluable tool in this process, assisting with research, structuring narratives, and enhancing storytelling. Here are some effective ways to use ChatGPT in family history writing.

1. Gathering and Organizing Information

Before writing a family history, you need to collect and organize data from various sources such as census records, birth and death certificates, letters, and oral histories. ChatGPT can help by:

- Summarizing lengthy documents into key points.
- Providing guidance on structuring research notes.
- Suggesting ways to organize family trees or timelines effectively.

2. Crafting a Narrative Turning raw facts into an engaging narrative is crucial in family history writing. ChatGPT can:

- Help outline the story by suggesting chapter structures.
- Offer prompts to expand on specific life events.
- Assist in creating smooth transitions between different periods or family members' stories.

3. Enhancing Writing Style Writing in a compelling and engaging manner can make family histories more enjoyable to read. ChatGPT can assist by:

- Suggesting alternative word choices or sentence structures.
- Helping to maintain a consistent tone throughout the document.
- Offering ideas for adding emotional depth or personal reflections to the story.

4. Fact-Checking and Contextual Research A well-written family history should include historical context to help readers understand the lives of their ancestors. ChatGPT can help by:

- Providing background information on historical events, places, or cultural traditions.
- Suggesting resources for verifying historical accuracy.
- Assisting with fact-checking details about a specific time period.

5. Overcoming Writer's Block Many writers face challenges in getting started or continuing their work. ChatGPT can:

- Offer writing prompts to spark inspiration.
- Generate introductory or concluding paragraphs.
- Provide feedback on a rough draft to help refine ideas.

6. Editing and Proofreading Once the family history is written, it is essential to polish it for clarity and readability. ChatGPT can:

- Identify grammatical errors and suggest corrections.
- Recommend ways to improve sentence flow and coherence.
- Help ensure consistency in names, dates, and facts.

7. Creating Engaging Ancestor Profiles Individual profiles of ancestors can make the family history more personal. ChatGPT can:

- Generate character sketches based on available information.
- Suggest ways to integrate anecdotes or personal stories.
- Offer ideas for visually organizing profiles, such as tables or sidebars.

8. Formatting and Presentation Finally, the way a family history is presented can enhance its impact. ChatGPT can:

- Suggest layout and formatting options for better readability.
- Help draft introduction and acknowledgments sections.
- Offer ideas for adding images,

maps, or genealogical charts.

By leveraging ChatGPT's capabilities, family history writers can streamline their research, enhance their storytelling, and create well-structured, engaging narratives that preserve their family legacy for future generations.

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Presidents Report

WHAGS and consider adding a donation.

I would also like to thank everyone who has gifted WHAGS with their time, talents, and goodies. Volunteers are core to WHAGS and its operations. The Hospitality team, with the themed table and treats, provides a delightful addition to our in-person programs. Thank you to the Membership team that keeps us organized and greets members and visitors as they arrive for the program. The Tech team ensures we can see and hear the presentations in person and virtually. The SIG coordinators and attendees provide opportunities to delve deeper into different aspects of genealogy and expand our horizons. Try one, you might find yourself surprised by what you learn. The newsletter, website, and Leaflet teams kept us informed on WHAGS, upcoming events, and solicited feedback for improvements in professional and engaging ways. My heartfelt thanks go to all of our members for their support over the last

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Editors Note

Ancestry.com remains a go-to platform for those seeking to trace their family history. Gail's presentation was designed to help members navigate the ever-changing landscape of the website and maximize its potential for discovering new genealogical information. The presentation was well attended, with 20 members present in person and another 20 joining via Zoom. The recording is available behind the members-only paywall on the WHAGS website at <https://www.whags.org/meeting-handouts>.

April will prove to be another enriching genealogy experience with a presentation from **Faye Stallings**. Faye is a professional genealogist at Southern Hearts Genealogy and is currently the President of the Board of Certification of Genealogists. Her presentation, titled *Love & Marriage: The Nexus of Change*, is something that I look forward to. It promises to be an exciting opportunity to explore how these pivotal life events are intertwined with historical shifts and how they shape our family histories. April's society meeting will be by Zoom only, which is a bit of a change. Oh, how we will miss lunch at Clay's! Perhaps we can have a Zoom luncheon after the meeting—just sit around and chat while munching on our home

lunches.

In May, we will finish the program year with **Lisa Louise Cooke**, a renowned genealogist, speaker, and host of the popular podcast *Genealogy Gems*. Lisa has been a leader in the genealogy community for many years, specializing in helping genealogists utilize technology to improve their research. Her presentation, titled *Google Books: The Tool You Should Use Every Day*, promises to be an informative session on how this valuable resource can assist us in our research and enrich our genealogical journeys.

In addition to the program, many activities are going on behind the scenes. Look into participating in the various Special Interest Groups (SIG): Beginners, DNA, Genealogy SOS, G2 User Group, Y-DNA Workgroup, and WHAGS Writers. Don't forget about our field trips! Our next outing is a bus trip to Clayton Library on May 3rd.

Also a mention about G2. G2 is a promising software, which is the brainchild of WHAGS member **Rick Armes**. Rick has spent countless hours, days, and months developing this software, pouring his expertise and passion into creating a tool that promises to be incredibly helpful in organizing genealogy research. G2 offers features that

make tracking family trees, sources, and documents easier and more efficient.

Finally, a call for volunteers. The WHAGS leadership team elections are coming up, and we need new faces to help guide the future of our society. The success of WHAGS depends on members stepping up to help out. This is a great chance to get involved and make a difference in shaping the direction of our society. We encourage you to consider joining the leadership team and contributing to the growth of WHAGS.

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Presidents Report

year. You are why we do this, and what makes WHAGS the successful organization it is.

Second, as noted above, this is my final year as President. The new Board, with a new President, will take the reins on 01 June. I worked to ensure WHAGS remained a healthy organization providing value to members by encouraging the WHAGS Leadership Team (LT) to provide the best possible genealogy experience to our members and visitors. I ran the meetings, and they did the work. It has been a joy to work with the competent and professional individuals of the LT (past and present) over the last four years. I look forward to sup-

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Presidents Report

porting the new Board and LT as they continue to nurture and improve WHAGS.

Have a great summer and see you in September!

War in the South Pacific

By Linda Hudson

This is a follow-up regarding my Dad and his service as reported in the February 2025 WHAGS Journal (Vol. 5, Issue 4).

My son queried his Dad a



Linda's father on the left and his friend W.M. Palmer on the right, somewhere in the South Pacific.

little bit more about my Dad's service. It turns out it wasn't in Palawan, but it was close. His service was regarding the Battle of Peleliu which is on the island of Palau. It occurred in 1944 and was one of the "bloodiest military conflicts of the Pacific." My Dad, who was on leave and stateside, had been assigned to the 1619th Ordnance Service Maintenance Company. I don't know the actual losses for my

Dad's specific company, but there was a 40 percent casualty rate for those serving the Philippines, and the U.S. had a 40 percent casualty rate to liberate the Peleliu island from over 10,000 Japanese soldiers. Over 6,000 marines were injured and another 1,200 killed. "The 81st Division suffered over 3,000 casualties. In total, the U.S. troop casualty count "was 9,615 for Peleliu, Anguar and Ngesebus with 1,656 dead." This data comes from www.tamucc.edu. This battle ran from September 15 to November 1944 and had the highest US Armed Forces casualty rate of any amphibious assault in the Pacific operations of World War II, without producing a military gain.

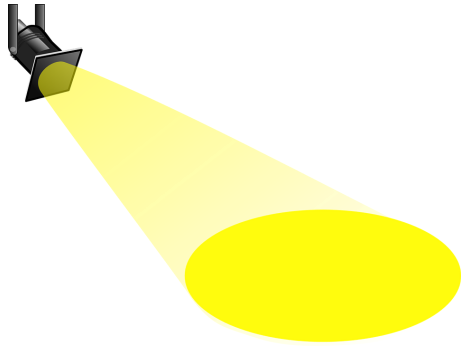
I had mentioned in the previous newsletter, efforts are being made to recreate and publish the events of World War II due to the loss of records in St.

Louis. It is possible to find out details like the ones recounted above, thanks to the many who have worked to recreate troop movements based

The Battle of Peleliu, a brutal and controversial engagement in the Pacific Theater of World War II, saw US Marines and Army troops clash with heavily fortified Japanese forces on the small, lobster-claw shaped island of Peleliu in the Palau Islands from September 14th to November 7, 1944.

on other sources. Just a simple Google search revealed information gathered by TAMU-CC, the National Park Service, History.com, the Lieber Institute at West Point, the National Archives, and others. The National WWII Museum in New Orleans called the Battle of Peleliu: The Forgotten Hell. Several books have been written about this battle. I now know what to look for. I may not know the names of my Dad's "service buddies," but their story has not been forgotten. Gratitude goes to all those who are telling their stories.





Member Spotlight

Kyla has been a WHAGS member for 3 years but researching since her teens. Her favorite saying is, “We’re probably related! I’m not kidding!” She loves genealogy because of the opportunity to learn something new every day.



Starting part-time in Circulation and moving into Adult Services, a Thanksgiving potluck conversation led to a full-time position as the only Genealogy Program Librarian in the Harris County Public Library system at the Lone Star College Tomball Community Library. Her job is the best in the world because she spends most of her day teaching people how to do their own research.

A recent project is a pictorial town history book titled “Images of America: Tomball.” It was written and compiled by Kyla

and a large committee. They contacted and researched all the first families in the area, an undertaking of three and a half years. The book has stories of early pioneers, as well as original photographs of the creation of the town through the early farming and railroad days, then the oil boom years in the 1940s/50s and the “technology era” of the 1970s and 80s. As a fundraiser for the library, it is available at local stores and Amazon.

Currently she is working with the City of Tomball and Lone Star College to establish “The Greater Tomball Area History Center.” Located on the college campus, the physical repository will hold city and college records and other archival items open to researchers by appointment. There will also be an online digital archive, where material and photographs borrowed from residents and organizations will be scanned and processed into a free digital platform and then the materials will be returned to their owner.

Future endeavors include a Substack genealogy newsletter, a YouTube channel where she will have tips on free genealogy resources, and a line of genealogy swag merch, with sayings like: “There’s always something new to learn”, “How

did I not know?” or “I’m Beyond My Ancestor’s Wildest Dreams”.

Windy Corbett has been a member since 2023 but has always been passionate about her family’s history. Windy grew up in Sumter, South Carolina and heard family stories about being related to the Kings and Queens of Europe. Her chance to verify these stories came when her husband was stationed in Europe in 1971. A career Army soldier, they met and married after his tour of duty in Vietnam.



Back then, all the research was done in person, in libraries, archives and graveyards. No online search was available. While researching in Europe, she discovered her family immigrated to Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina in the 1600’s. She is descended from John C. Calhoun, the 7th Vice President of the United States. They are also related to the D’Oyley, Earle, Croft, Bohun, and Baker families, some of whom were former governors of South Carolina under the Lord Proprietors.

Windy has three sons that are

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Spotlight Continued

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Spotlight

her pride and joy. The oldest, Kit, builds ships in Africa and Nigeria. The middle son, Eric, is a Project Manager for Harris Health. And the youngest, Joey, holds his doctorate in Near Eastern Anthropology and Archeology; and is the Editor-in-Chief for Biblical Archaeology Review magazine.

Upon returning to South Carolina after three tours of duty in Europe, she had an opportunity to establish a local archive and museum. She broadened her education and founded the Clarendon County Archives and History Center in Manning, South Carolina. It is still in the Old Manning Library and has personal papers, maps, photos, and books about the cultural history of Clarendon County. With this experience, she was also able to work as an archivist for seven years at the Camden Archives and Museum in Camden, South Carolina when she returned to Sumter in 2012. The South Carolina DAR is housed there, and has an excellent genealogical research library.

Now she only works at spoiling her three fantastic granddaughters and cleaning up her files for the next generation. She is a DAR member and has recent-

ly discovered she is a Mayflower descendant.

Her favorite software is Family Tree Maker connected to Ancestry. She has been using it since its creation in 1989 and is willing to help others

The Bingle Road Series

In genealogy, we often focus on distant ancestors, but childhood memories also shape our family history. Liz Philip captures this in her mid-20th century tales about growing up on Bingle Road in Houston. Here is one of her contributions to the Journal, aptly titled "Bingle Road Stories."

Bingle Road Stories

By Liz Philip

Dad and Mom bought a small, two-bedroom house on Bingle Road in 1954. My earliest memory is watching Hurricane Carla in 1961 through a window covered with masking tape. The rain was intense, pounding the window in sheets.

Dad worked in construction, and our home was in a constant state of repair. With a growing family, two bedrooms were not enough. He did the work himself, saving up and buying the lumber a little bit at a time.

My sister, brother, and I would "help" Dad, wearing the

same type of apron as his. Made from thick cotton, it tied at the back and had three pockets. It could hold nails and a hammer if tucked in exactly right. We would hand our nails to Dad as he pounded them into the boards. Most of the time, they went in straight. Sometimes, they were crooked. The crooked nails were pounded flush or pulled out. It was part of our job to put those pulled-out crooked nails in our apron so they would not be dropped and stepped on. A nail puncture in the foot is very painful. When we were older, he showed us how to drive nails in ourselves by holding the hammer correctly, letting it do the work.



Dad with shed to his left

He also built a carport and a large shed. The carport was wide enough for two cars, but the cars were never parked there. They were in the driveway, blocking the opening. The carport had a concrete floor, a basketball hoop, and a pulley in the rafters. We would play basketball, dribbling

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Bingle Road

the ball and shooting at the basket. Or pretending to be Peter Pan or Superman by being belted in by Dad and swung around by the rope in the pulley. Dad would work on the cars in the carport, keeping them in good shape. The shed held his tools, the water well pump, and a horse stall.

Our backyard contained a swing set, jungle gym, and seesaw. A double clothesline was strung between two metal pipes. A large banana tree was located just outside the bathroom window. During games of hide and seek, the area between the banana tree stalks was the best hiding spot. Mom was very fond of plants and flowers. She planted a banana tree, canna lilies, wisteria,



Dad Riding Prince Pitiful Pearl

roses, and a pecan tree. My sister and I have her swamp lilies at our homes to this day. I think the plants came from Covington's Nursery, just up Bingle Road from the house. I remember wan-

dering around there and petting their tabby cat, Supernate.

We had several pets of our own, including horses, a goat, dogs, cats, and chickens. Our first horse, an old white gelding named Prince Pitiful Pearl, was so thin that his hip bones and ribs were visible. He looked more like a cow than a horse from behind. All he wanted to do was eat. He had been neglected for a long time and needed a lot of care from the veterinarian. Dad taught us how to care for a horse. We would mix his feed, fill his water, and give him apple slices and sugar cubes. We cleaned his stall and laid fresh hay. e loved this old horse, but we had to be careful when riding him. He would brush against the house or fences to knock us off on his way to the stall in the shed.

A few years later, our second horse was a palomino gelding named Sonny. He was a beautiful horse with a golden body and white mane and tail. We would ride him all around the area, to Schwartz Park, Gerland's Grocery store, and Shipley's Donuts. He would also try to knock us off, step on our feet, and nip. I fell off him once when he quickly rounded the corner of the house on the way to his stall. I landed square on my backside. He would beg



Dad feeding Sonny

Grandma Teen for carrots by putting his head over the fence by her kitchen door.

Once, a heavy rainstorm flooded his stall. At the time, Dad was adding more bedrooms and a family room to the house. It was unfinished, but the stud walls were up, with windows and a plywood floor installed. We laid the area with hay, feed, and water. Sonny was able to walk up the steps through the doorway from the backyard and into the house. He was high and dry. After the storm stopped and the water drained away, he was led out of the house, into the backyard. We had prepared the area well and it wasn't too difficult to clean up.

Our first dog was a collie named Queenie. Dad rescued her from a garage across from the construction site where he was working, abandoned without food or water. She was a smart, beautiful dog who kept us safe when we were in the yard. We would dress her up and try to ride her. Queenie

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Bingle Road

had to be put down when she got heartworms.

Grandma Teen and Grandpa came to live with us in 1959. They had a white, single-wide trailer with blue trim on the back half of the property. There was a sidewalk that led from their door to the carport. I remember when the concrete truck came and poured down the sidewalk. Dad said to stay out of the wet concrete, but I did not. I do not think I ventured far into it, but it was enough to make him mad. Grandma Teen always had our favorite cookies or candy on hand. When we went to Gerland's grocery store, she would let us pick out whatever we liked. She watched soap operas every day on her television set, and one of her favorites was General Hospital. She would make pralines and put pecans from the tree in them. She had a fig tree in the yard and would cook those too. After Grandpa died in 1973, Grandma came to live with us in the house.

We went to Edgewood Elementary, Landrum Junior High, and Spring Branch Senior High School. I do not know why we did not ride the school bus. Perhaps Bingle Road traffic was too busy for the bus to stop. Edgewood was around the corner on Ojeman Road, so Mom would drive us or we would walk.

Sometimes we would hop the back fence and cut through the neighbor's yard. Landrum was across Bingle Road about four blocks down by Schwartz Park. Spring Branch High was a few miles away, so Mom or Dad would drive us. After I got my driver's license Sophomore year, I drove myself and my sister. Senior year I drove all three of us to high school.

During summer break we would go to Schwartz Park to play on the playground or swim. There was a tall silver slide, a merry-go-round, and swings. The silver slide was so hot you could burn your legs sliding down. The merry-go-round would knock you off if it spun too fast. The swings had thick rubber seats. We would swing high and jump off. When we were old enough, we would walk to the pool in the morning, swim and hang out until lunch and then head home. There was a limit to how many people could be in the pool, so you had to get in line early. The Red Cross taught swimming lessons there and I earned my Beginner Swimmer button. Treading water was the hardest part of the test for me.

Mom and Dad lived on Bingle Road until 1997 and saw a lot of changes during their time there. The house transformed from two to five

bedrooms. The road went from a two-lane blacktop with ditches to



Left to right: Kathy, Joe, and Liz with grandparents mobile home in background

a four-lane road with sewer. A rural setting turned into a commercial one. The house is no longer there. The last owner sold the house separately from the land and it was moved away. A large blue metal building sits on the lot and its address is on Ojeman Road instead of Bingle Road.

Each family has their own stories about where they grew up. These are a few of ours. I hope you have happy memories of yours.





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Helping to Find Your Roots

Monthly meetings are hybrid: in person at Steve Radack Community Center, 18650 Clay Road, and via Zoom

WHAGS April Program

*****fully virtual meeting this month***
see meeting registration information below**

Love and Marriage: The Nexus of Change

Presenter: Faye Stallings, CG



Marriage was an important event in the life of our ancestors, and it represented a nexus of change, connecting two families and altering the identity of women. This presentation will focus on marriage in the U.S. and sources for marriage information. It highlights the importance of understanding family connections and using cluster research (aka FAN club) in conducting

family history research.

Faye Stallings is the President of the Board for Certification of Genealogists. She formerly served as the President of the Federation of Genealogical Societies and as a member of the Board of Directors for the National Genealogical Society following the merger of NGS and FGS in 2020. She is a professional genealogist at Southern Hearts Genealogy and received her Certified Genealogist credential in 2018. In her prior professional career, she was an Assistant Corporate Controller, General Auditor, and Chief Ethics Officer. She is a sixth-generation Kentuckian and loves spending time with her family – both the living and the dead.

Saturday, April 19, 2025

Meet & greet at 10:00 am

Program begins at 10:30 am

Due to holiday scheduling conflicts at county facilities, this month's meeting will be fully virtual. Visit our website at www.whags.org for the Zoom registration link. Bring your own lunch for a virtual lunch following the meeting. Visitors are always welcome!