

# TURNING FAMILY PHOTOS INTO FAMILY STORIES

They say a picture is worth a thousand words and it is true. Old family photos are a great way to unlock the floodgates to long forgotten family stories. Sit down with your grandmother and a photo album and she will fill your ear with tales both tall and true.

A few well worded questions will help you to get beyond a simple description of the pictures. Ask questions like: What was he or she well known for doing? How did you and grandpa meet? Where are some of the places you went in that car? What did you do for fun when you lived there? What ever happened to that old dog? Look at each picture carefully and come up with questions that will invite your elders to go into detail.

Recently, I was talking to my Aunt Irene about this picture. She told me that my great uncle was born and raised in Wayne County, Tennessee, near the home of Davy Crockett. His mother was Cherokee, her name was Hannah Jane Reed. He was related to the Clantons who faced Doc Holiday and Wyatt Earp in the famous shoot out at OK Corral, but as usual, Hollywood got the story all wrong.



This is a picture of my great uncle, Johnny Clanton.  
Do you know who is sitting on his lap?



When people remember Johnny Clanton they say that he was a great hunter. I have mixed feelings about hunting, especially fox hunting, but my Aunt Irene assured me that they never killed the fox. It was a game of wits. In the evening, the men would gather with their hounds. They would build a big fire and sit around listening to the hounds chase the fox. If something happened and the hounds did not come back, a man could leave, leave his coat by the fire, and when he came back, his dog would be sitting by his coat waiting for him. They say a good fox hound was worth something. Maybe that is why my uncle chose to have his hound dog in the picture with him.

Look through some old family photos. Choose some of the pictures that have the best stories. Write a brief story about each of several pictures and gather them into a book of family stories.

For more information on telling family stories, collecting oral histories, and researching your genealogy please visit my web page.