

# So, You Maybe Wanna Write?

with  
Janet Mills



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# Know Thyself

You're a genealogist first,  
a writer second!



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## As A Genealogist, What turns you on? What Hooks you?

- The thrill of discovery?
- Solving a mystery?
- The joy of using powerful computer programs?
- Surfing the internet?
- Putting together puzzle pieces? (Achievement)
- Being the first to put together the pieces? (Power)
- Finding others to work with on your family? (Affiliation)
- What else?



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You may **NOT** wanna  
write!

And that's okay...



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But if you do  
**WANNA** write...



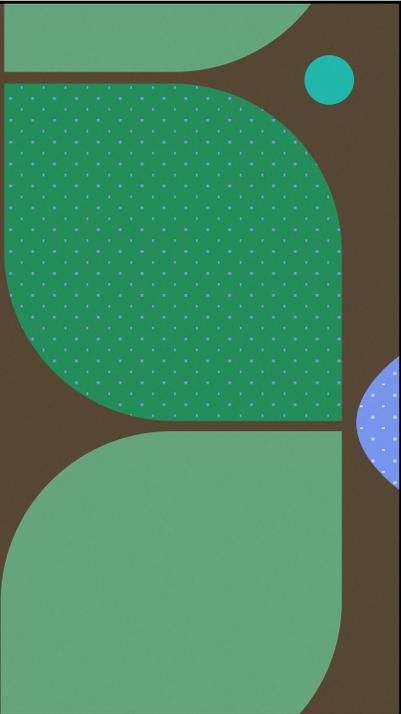
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What is the well-spring  
of your intentions?

- Dig deep
- Search for multiple motives
- My example

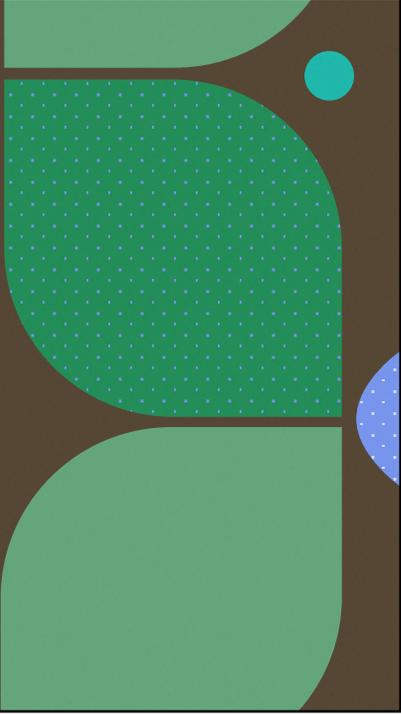


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...By the time the *1920 US Census* was taken, Hazel's younger brothers Tex and Eddie had been born. That left seven people living in the house with the dirt floor on Casey Creek Road. Hazel attended the same one-room, one-teacher, no-indoor-plumbing schoolhouse her older siblings had attended, probably from September 1919, until February 1923, when the family moved to Cincinnati. Once they had settled into the rental house at 821 Findlay Street in the West End neighborhood, Susie enrolled Hazel and Vern in Sands Elementary School at the corner of Poplar Street and Freeman Avenue.

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Nothing prepared Mom for her first day of school, as I learned one afternoon when I was a teenager. "The school was enormous and everyone in my classroom was in the same grade!" she said. Indeed, the school and playground took up half a city block. Mom would have been in third grade, had she started first grade at age 6 in 1919.

Mid-morning that first day at Sands, Mom said she tugged on the teacher's skirt and whispered, "Where's the outhouse? I need to go!" She said the teacher led her to the bathroom and returned to the classroom. Within minutes, however, Mom tugged at the teacher's skirt again and whispered, "Where's the corn cobs at?"

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With that, Mom dissolved into hard laughter, the kind that puts stitches in your side. She eventually continued, “That kind-hearted teacher took me back to the bathroom and showed me toilet paper. She told me how to use it, and how to flush a toilet too. She waited for me to flush, then took me to one of the sinks and made sure I washed my hands with soap.”

Mom paused. “Then she asked me if I had a tooth-brush and I told her no.”

Mom’s voice cracked on her next sentence, “The next day, she took me to the bathroom again and gave me a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste and showed me how to brush my teeth.” I looked away as Mom wiped her cheek with the back of her hand.

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What is YOUR Passion?  
YOUR inspiration?  
YOUR desire?



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**3 Moments I Want to Spare You**

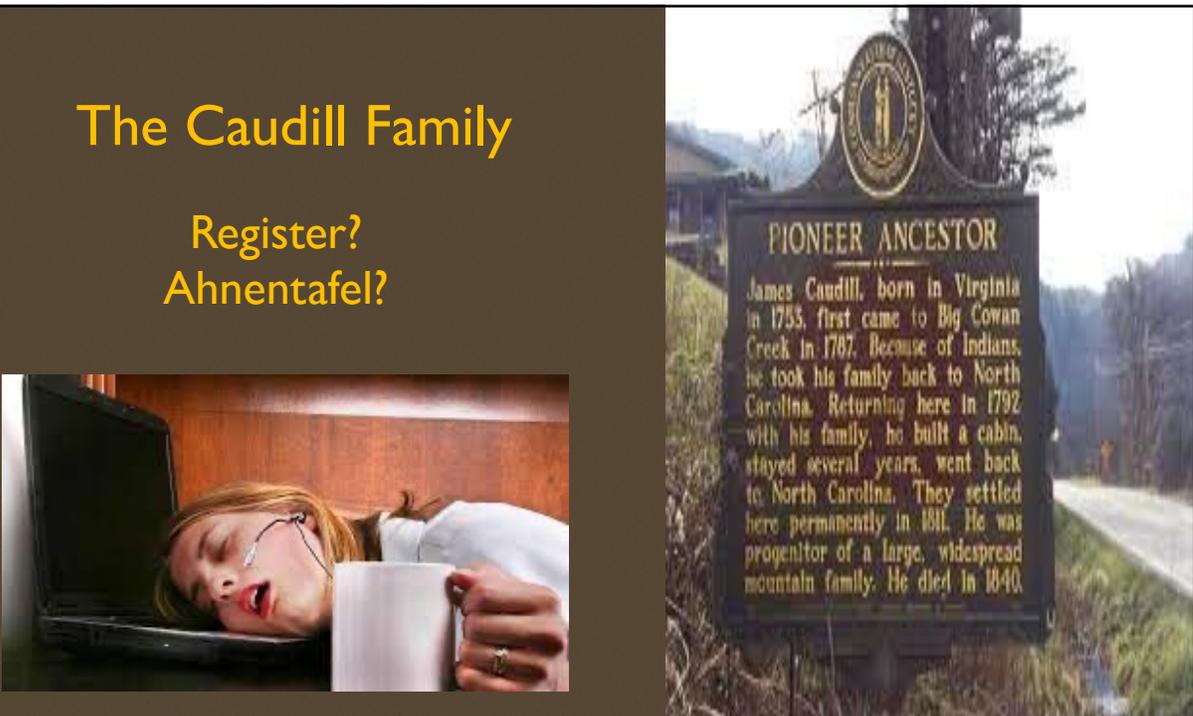
...since you wanna write something or other about family history



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**The Caudill Family**

Register?  
Ahnentafel?



**PIONEER ANCESTOR**  
James Caudill, born in Virginia in 1753, first came to Big Cowan Creek in 1767. Because of Indians, he took his family back to North Carolina. Returning here in 1792 with his family, he built a cabin, stayed several years, went back to North Carolina. They settled here permanently in 1811. He was progenitor of a large, widespread mountain family. He died in 1840.

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## The Millsaps Family

A creative nonfiction about 10 generations of Millsaps from the immigrant to my grandparents

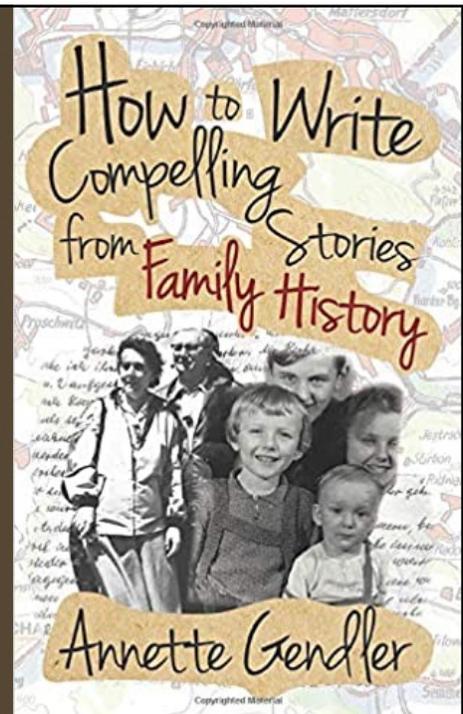
- Documented
- Contextualized by history and geography
- Enriched with socio-economic status and ethnicity



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## Advice from HOW TO Books and the Internet

- Make a plan
- Write an outline
- Create a Table of Contents
- Find a book that's a model
- Well, at least, draw a mind-map



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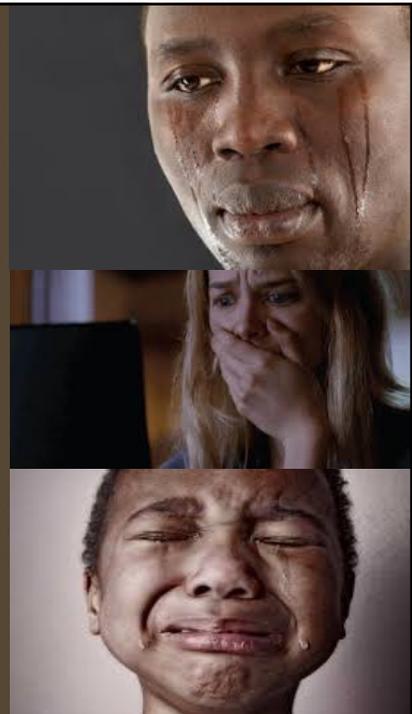
## Two Approaches to Projects



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## The Moments I Don't Want to Spare You

The double murder of my cousin and cousin-in-law



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## *“A Lynching Kept out of Sight”*

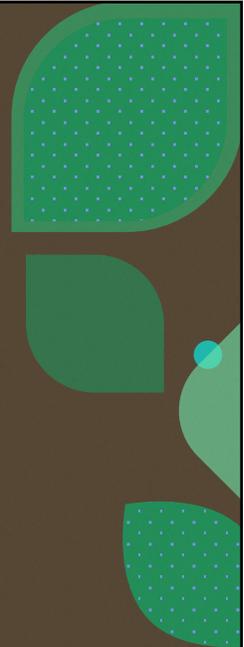
Published in the Washington Post  
September 2, 2016

by  
Alexa Mills  
Currently, Editor, New York Times



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Pvt. Felix Hall was strung up in a jackknife position in a shallow ravine. A quarter-inch noose, tethered to a sapling on the earthen bank above him, dug into the flesh of his neck. His feet, bound with baling wire, were attached by a second rope to three other saplings, and his hands were tied behind him.



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Hall succeeded in kicking loose his legs and freeing his left hand. Then, while he still had breath, he desperately scraped dirt loose from the ravine wall, trying to scoop out enough of the sienna-colored earth to build up a mound beneath his feet that he could stand on “to take the strain from his neck,” the FBI would later report. He got the dirt up to the arches of his dangling feet. But the earth was soft and loose and ultimately not enough to support his weight.

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When investigators eventually arrived on the scene and examined his body, he’d been suspended in this position, in the woods of Fort Benning, for more than six weeks. Maggots were eating his flesh.

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# My Hissy Fit



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I need a kaleidoscope to write about my high school years. Looking back, I see one thing for a moment, then there's a twist, and I see something else. It's twist after twist after twist. I can't hold onto anything.

Twist: My mother didn't get to go to high school. *Withrow was such a privilege.*

Twist: I didn't get to go to Walnut Hills, the by-invitation-only college-prep high school. I qualified to go, but my parents wouldn't let me leave Mt. Washington for seventh grade. *Withrow was second best.*

Twist: I had friends who went to private high schools. *Withrow was mainstream, non-elitist.*

Twist: Other friends went to Anderson High, at the time, a rural school. *Withrow was an uptown, city-sophisticated, hotshot place with a dizzying array of offerings.*

During high school, I pulled one of those Chinese finger puzzles over my finger and yanked it all four years. I never got it off. It tightened and it made my finger hurt. I did my best to hide the Chinese puzzle—my vaguely formed sense of self, my ridiculous self-doubts.



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## Lots of Choices

- No one way
- Good ways, better ways
- Anything goes these days

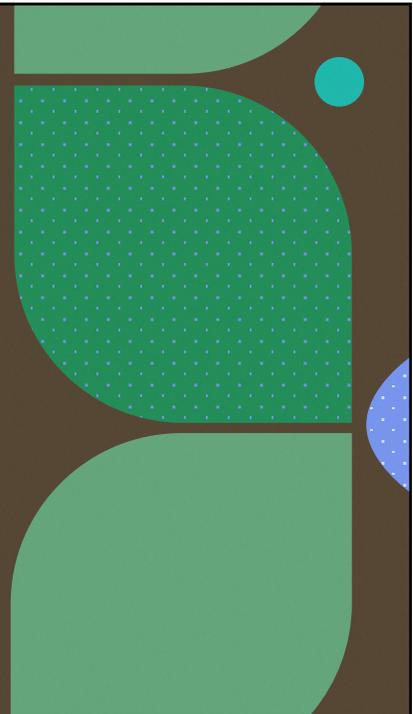
SO: Do what you like—or what you can manage—and have a good time doing it!



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## Choices:

Pedigree Chart  
Descendancy Chart



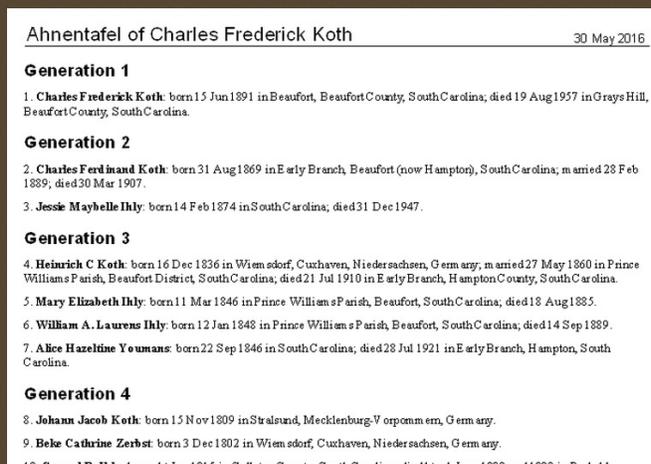
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# Choices: Register Writing



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# Choices: Ahnentafel Writing



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# Choices: Family Group Sheets Plus

*KY Ancestors of William Thomas Mills & Lucy Alice Scales*  
 104 pages, spiral bound  
 Clear front cover, stiff back cover, photo quality paper

- Cover Page: Title, Photo, Surnames, Author name, address, email, date
- Introduction
- Table of Contents
- Part I: Grandparents: Family group sheet, photos
- Part II Ancestors of Grandfather: Pedigree chart, family group sheets, photos (credited)
- Part III Ancestors of Grandmother: Pedigree chart, family group sheets, photos (credited)
- Back page: Author profile

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Kentucky Ancestors of  
 William Thomas MILLS & Lucy Alice SCALES  
 of Pulaski County



Barrier	Hall	Locker	Mills	Roberts
Burton	Harris	Malcolm	Millsaps	Robertson
Claunch	Harrison	Massey	Modrell	Scales
Dearing	Hatfield	McClendon	Page	Walker
English	Hinton	McMurtry	Plumbstead	Wood
Farris	Howard	Godby	Randall	Woods
Gooding	Johnson	McGowan	Richardson	Woolsey
		McGown		
		McGuire		

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## Topic and Readings for Writing CREATIVE Family History and Local History

**Taught by Steve Barrett, PhD, in Boise, Idaho**

Finding the Records and the Narrative: John Bailey, *The Lost German Slave Girl*

Show, as well as Tell: Edward Ball, *Slaves in the Family*

It Takes a Village I: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (Pulitzer Prize and Bancroft Prize Winner)

It Takes a Village II: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute In Nineteenth Century New York*

Fiction Based on Historical Records: Lalita Tademy, *Cane River*; Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*; and Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

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## Anything Goes! It just depends on:

- What do you want to tell?
- Who do you want to tell it to?  
(Audience)
- How will you disseminate it?
- What organization/structure/design is  
best suited to these answers?

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## Self Publishing

- Copy and spiral bind
- Email a PDF
- Shutterfly, Ancestry
- Amazon KDP: Kindle Direct Publishing
- Other self publishing companies:  
<https://selfpublishing.com/self-publishing-companies/>

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## Parting Pearls& Opening Dialogue

- Start anywhere: Beginning, middle, end
- Join a writing group; get critiques of your work
- Check facts against records as you go
- Ask family members to collaborate
- Last thing to write: Introduction, Appreciations
- Learn as you go—i.e. automatic table of contents, book format, elements of book
- Include images, photos, charts
- Use endnotes rather than footnotes
- Edit, proof, rewrite: Writing is re-writing!
- Keep style consistency notes!

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So, You  
Maybe  
Wanna  
Write?

Thank you!  
Janet Mills

