



TELL ME A STORY: Writing Your Family Memoir with StoryTerrace

Tony Bandy looks at the StoryTerrace and their approach to capturing family history memories

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WORKING THROUGH SOME GENEALOGY RECENTLY, I WAS bogged down trying to find a branch of my family. While I had facts and dates, I was really struggling with “knowing” about these relatives, what they did, how they lived, what was life really like for them. Have you ever faced this with your own family research? It’s a common theme in genealogy and one that can be entirely frustrating.

how it all fits together.

What It Is

Founded by Rutger Bruining in 2016 and rapidly growing ever since, StoryTerrace’s goals are quite simple: Capture first person and family history memories into a professionally written book that’s either print, digital, or both. Says Bruining on the origins of the company:

“...I was determined to create an opportunity for everyone to record their stories, to create a moment to pause and reflect, in order to relieve the feeling of times past later on. Eventually this led to the simple premise upon which StoryTerrace is based: a biographer for every person.”

From a personal and genealogist point of view, this is very appealing, particularly if we have been too busy researching past family history to write down our own or other living relatives’ information. (Or in my case, and perhaps yours, there is just too much going on in your life to write things down!)

In any event, while we know that the idea of interviewing family members and obtaining their stories is not necessarily unique to StoryTerrace, the methodologies



While we can’t go back in time to interview our ancestors and fix this problem, we can make a start in helping our future family members overcome this same problem. By actively compiling our own lives, our current living relatives and their stories, and making them available for future generations, it will be much easier for them than it was for us.

I recently had a chance to learn about a genealogy/family history service that does just this. Known as StoryTerrace, it’s a unique approach to a fairly common problem of knowing about our living family members and saving their stories for future generations. Let’s jump right in and see



and practice in which the service operates certainly is. Read on for some additional details.

How It Works

To get started is simple. Head on over to the StoryTerrace website at <https://storyterrace.com> and sign-up with an email. You will be contacted by the company, introducing itself and the services offered, but also giving you the opportunity to share a bit about yourself, what type of story you are looking for and what product you would want written. Next, the company will take the information about your ideas and match it up with contracted and professional writers who they think will be a good match for you to tell your story to.

According to the resources I spoke to at StoryTerrace, there are multiple types of writers (and experience levels) that the company works with. These generally fall into the following categories:

- Junior writers
(talented journalists or authors)
- Senior (experienced) writers
(other published works and experiences)

- Critically acclaimed writers.
(Award-winning authors, highly experienced)

In reviewing details for this story, I found out there are many writers available and if you want to know more about background and history, head on over to <https://storyterrace.com/ourwriters> for details about professional backgrounds and accomplishments.

Once a writer has been assigned

to you, the next step is to then begin work on your book. This can happen over email, or other forms of communication, but most often is done in a person-to-person meeting/series of meetings between you and your assigned writer. There is no specific time period for this, but according to the information provided to me by StoryTerrace, interview sessions usually run 2-3 hours, depending on the story, type of book and other details.

Once the initial interviews have been done, the assigned writer will then go ahead and draft the book, referring to you for additional information, facts or error correction as needed. Ultimately, you, as the customer, will have final say on what is written and will approve the finished work. Once done, and images (if any) are added to the text, the book is then proofed, printed and delivered.

Pricing

Given the huge variety of possible permutations that any personal history or genealogy book could contain, StoryTerrace offers a wide variety of packages, options,



and price points. These include:

- Compact (\$1,900 - \$2,950)
- Complete (\$3,150 - \$4,750)
- Novella (\$5,950 - \$7,450)

Pricing includes book sizes ranging from 55-125 pages, 20-40 photos, and multiple physical copies of the book and eBook. As outlined above, the prices are complete and include everything from the initial through production and printing. For additional details and information, check out the pricing list available at <https://storyterrace.com/pricing>.

Additional Services and Options?

Depending on your budget and needs, StoryTerrace also offers additional services and options that might be useful. This includes working with you if you have already self-published a book, editing

services, and special formatting for the books, such as additions like foldable family tree inserts, translation options, audio books, coffee table size books and more. If you do have any special requests or questions, be sure and inform StoryTerrace up front.

Technical Details

There are a few technical details that you should be aware of concerning the service. In talking with StoryTerrace staff for this review, I submitted a list of questions and what follows are the responses. Images for your book can be scanned by you and uploaded to the service, but in some cases, StoryTerrace will scan photos for you.

- Uploaded family stories and media are stored in a secure method by the service and are not readily accessible.
- Once the project is done, writers will destroy any

personal records or notes taken in the interview process, but StoryTerrace will retain a copy of the finished work unless requested by the customer not to do so.

- Custom books and sizing are available upon request.
- Extra book copies, interviews with assigned writers and publishing services are available.
- Final copywrite is shared between the customer and StoryTerrace, but the service cannot do anything with the works unless approved by the customer.
- Audio books and eBooks are available on a special case-by-case basis.
- Books will not contain an ISBN in finished form, but one can be purchased/obtained if desired.

While not complete, use these tips as a starting point for your own conversation with them should you go ahead with the service.

Wrap-Up and Final Thoughts

Genealogy and the study of our families is much more than just dry facts and dates. It's about lives, it's about stories, it's about the daily routines that we all live. While we cannot bring back the past and find out about all our ancestors, we can certainly prepare for and help future genealogists as they write the story of our lives. Given this, StoryTerrace might be the way forward for you. It's unique, greatly interesting and might just fit your needs. ☺

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further information

If you are interested, the service does sound appealing and I think there are a lot of positives to consider. To assist you in determining if it is right for you, I've put together some links below to share more with you about the service as well as reviews and other information:

New York Times Review of Story Terrace:

www.nytimes.com/2017/11/30/fashion/books-custom-story-terrace.html

Story Terrace Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/story.terrace

Story Terrace Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://storyterrace.com/faq>

Story Terrace Writers Information:

<https://storyterrace.com/ourwriters>

TechCrunch Looks at Story Terrace:

<https://techcrunch.com/2016/10/06/it-was-a-dark-and-stormy-night>

YouTube Interview: Pepper Family & Story Terrace:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkkM-ZYzA9k

Take a moment to examine the links and then think about your plans, think about your family members and see if this service might work for you!