

# Dress Your Ancestors, ("Klä på dina förfäder")

A family history photo time travel project

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September 28, 2023, a project presented by Anna Scheutz

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## OVERVIEW

The concept for "Dress Your Ancestors" starts with the idea that an old photograph of a beloved ancestor can be the starting point for an investigation into the life they lived. When you think about their experiences, it's as if you were dressing them the way you might dress a paper doll. Your work will give thoughtful consideration to who they were, where they lived, and whom they might interact with.

This approach perfectly suits the challenge of combining facts to bring an ancestor's story to life and is the spirit of the Swedish idiom, "Klä på dina förfäder."

## Goals

1. Focus on an individual ancestor and the life they lived
2. Assemble what you learn into media that can be shared with your audience while preserving archives and protecting the privacy of living people.

## Specifications

At its root, this project involves paying attention to details so that you care enough about their story to be able to share it. Anna used tools she's comfortable with including PowerPoint and photo apps. You can use your own preferred tools.

## Key Steps

### I. Choose a photo

Curiosity is really key here so not just any photo will do. Pick a photo that has some charm or interest to it. The seeds for your curiosity may lie in another photo, the one you'll center your story on should be interesting enough to engage others. Your success here is in sharing the joy of the story with others.

It can even be a photo of a person, but it might also be about a building such as a schoolhouse, home, or pub.

### II. Make a timeline

A timeline can be a powerful tool for understanding disparate facts in context. You can use any kind of tool to lay this out but what typically works best is something that uses visual cues to connect facts. Spreadsheets, slides, or whiteboards work well.

### III. Explore the timeline for personal facts

Consider relevant categories of facts to insert into the timeline of known facts about your person or place. These would be facts that might have affected them or those they loved. For example, if you have genealogical facts like their dates of birth, marriage, and death, consider the key facts of other members of their family, or dates for important dates like the birth of children or death of a spouse.

### IV. Explore the timeline for local, national, and historical facts

Other historical facts that occurred during those same periods such as wars, natural disasters, or political changes might have had a significant impact on their lives. In the case of a building or place, natural disasters like fires and earthquakes could be significant, but so could the construction of other buildings nearby or significant political changes like temperance movements or religious edicts.

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## V. Your findings become your story and your connection to the person or building

Don't be shy about allowing personal connections to weave into the story. Were you born on the same date as this person passed, for example? Your personal connection will fuel your interest and be conveyed when you share the story.

## VI. Enjoy and share

Once you've captured the story, enjoy it and share it with others who share your connections or perhaps a passion for the history of the family or the building.

## VII. Keep an open mind to new questions


While sharing your story, new questions will probably arise that help you see assumptions you might have made. View these as an opportunity to dig further to capture the story in greater resolution.

## VIII. Warning

This kind of project can be addictive. That's part of what makes it so much fun. When you find your curiosity waning, it's time to choose a new photo that intrigues you. Have fun!

## Project Recipe

This recipe is quite general since the concept for this project can be executed with a variety of different tools. Feel free to discuss this in the Community Forum and share ideas for your own variations or applications in combination with other projects.

PROJECT RECIPE	
<b>TITLE</b>	Dress Your Ancestors, ("Klä på dina förfäder"): A family history photo time travel project.
<b>TYPE</b>	A concept for research that can be applied to a variety of media.
<b>TIME (est.)</b>	No fixed time window.
<b>TOOLS &amp; MATERIALS</b>	Computer, search Typically a writing program combined with visual tools for presenting photographs and a timeline. May be a presentation tool or even a video.
<b>PREPARATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose a photo</li> <li>2. Make a timeline</li> <li>3. Explore the timeline for personal facts</li> <li>4. Explore the timeline for local, national, and historical facts</li> <li>5. Your findings become your story and your connection to the person or building</li> <li>6. Enjoy and share</li> <li>7. Keep an open mind to new questions</li> <li>8. Warning — this may become addictive</li> </ol>
<b>NOTES</b>	This structured approach is a great way to introduce family history research to a novice and could be used for programming in a genealogy club or other family group.
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<b>REVIEWS &amp; COMMENTS</b>	Reviews and comments can be added to the Projectkin Forum topic and rolled in here with updates.