



The Tin Box *Starter Kit*

Begin capturing your family's story — today.

A few gentle questions and a simple record sheet to gather the letters, photographs, and stories worth keeping — a place to begin, before they're lost.

Every family history begins the same way

— with a handful of things someone chose to keep. A name on the back of a photograph. A letter tucked in a drawer. A story told so often it has worn smooth. This kit is simply a place to gather them.

Don't worry about filling in every line. Even a little gives a strong start — the rest we discover together.

How to use it

1. Answer what you can. A few words per section is plenty.
2. Set aside the keepsakes. Anything physical that carries the story — tick what you have: (*do not worry much about organizing these. We handle that too.*)
 - ☐ Handwritten letters *Cursive writing? No problem! We can usually read all or most of it!*
 - ☐ Genealogy artifacts (census', vital records etc...)
 - ☐ Old newspaper clippings
 - ☐ Photographs (with any names or dates on the back)
 - ☐ Official documents — certificates, licenses, service & discharge papers
 - ☐ Diaries, journals, or scrapbooks* *-we love scrapbooks!*
 - ☐ Old audio or video recordings
3. Keep it to start your own record or scan and send it to me and I'll turn it into a beautifully researched book.

Whose story is this?

Who is the book about? (The name they went by, too.)

Is this person still living and available to be interviewed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, who is the closest person to interview about them?

Your name, and your relationship to them

Who is being written for? (Them, the children, the whole family...)

Is there a date or occasion you're hoping for?

The people who matter most

Just the names that have to be in the book.

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	WHY THEY MATTER

The chapters of a life -

We will discuss this portion on our meeting call.

Rough notes or bullet point are perfect — the big eras and turning points.

Early life & childhood

Young adulthood — school, service, first jobs, romance

Marriage, family, raising children

Later years & the legacy they leave

THE TRAIL TO FOLLOW

These are the details that let me find the records. A city and a year can open a census page, a city directory, or a local newspaper; a branch and a unit can open a service file.

Where they lived

City, state, or even the street address — and the years, or a range.

PLACE — CITY, STATE, OR ADDRESS

YEARS THERE

Work & occupations

OCCUPATION / EMPLOYER

YEARS

Military service

Years of service, branch (Army, Navy, Marines...), and unit or division

Which records survive? (draft registration, enlistment papers, discharge or separation)

What they believed

Values, sayings, or beliefs that defined them

If a grandchild read one page, what should it teach them?

Stories that must be told

The ones the family tells over and over. Just name them — we'll draw out the detail later.

Handled gently

Anything to treat with care, or leave out entirely?

THE FAMILY RECORD

The people

Names spelled the way they should appear in the book.

NAME (AS PRINTED)	RELATIONSHIP	BORN – DIED	A FACT TO REMEMBER

The timeline

The moments that anchor the story, in order.

YEAR	WHAT HAPPENED	WHO WAS THERE

WHEN YOU'RE READY

I'll take it *from here*.

You've gathered what your family kept. When you're ready, we'll talk — then I research, I write, and I hand you a book your family will read for generations.

Tin Box Tales is named for the tin box my grandmother kept — the last letters, read by her daughters only after she was gone. Every book I write is another tin box opened.

MARIA HETLAND · FOUNDER

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