Not every person makes history but everyone is a part of it. Who will record your family’s history?

The Frank B. Bedell/Watkins/Wilcox archive passed to Elsie Casperson upon the death of her cousin, Frances Wilcox. The collection was found in the attic of a house in Lexington, Virginia. The owners realized that the papers and photographs might have some intrinsic value so they searched the internet. An online article in *The Westfield Republican* prompted an email to the editor, who contacted the Chautauqua County Historical Society. Soon the archive was in the mail to Westfield.

Most items were in a banker’s envelope labeled “Frank S. Bedell: Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings.” Written in pencil on the envelope was an ominous note signed by Frances B. Wilcox, which reads, “The contents of this envelope are of no interest to anyone at all. Please burn without any delay.” We’re grateful that the collection remained intact because it provides vital information about local history.

To preserve your family’s history, it’s important to identify the people in photographs, create a matrix of relationships, and preserve items in archival-quality material. You might even want to appoint someone as the family archivist.

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Inscribed volume of *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* by Carl Sandburg, Blue Ribbon Books, 1926. Pencil notations by Frances Bedell Watkins Wilcox on pages 552 and 558 refer to her aunt Grace Bedell’s relationship to President Lincoln.

Grace Bedell’s story is told in Fred Trump’s *Lincoln’s Little Girl*, published in 1977 by Boyds Mills Press.
Frank S. Bedell was a man of his times. His life exemplified the Western expansion in the U.S.

Frank S. Bedell was twelve years old when his sister Grace Greenwood Bedell was born in the family’s hometown, Albion, New York. Their parents, Norman and Amanda Smiley Bedell, had eleven children, ten of whom survived to maturity. In 1851, Norman Bedell established Bedell & Berry Company in Albion. The firm thrived, selling cast iron stoves as far west as Detroit. In 1859, Bedell left the firm in the able hands of his son George. He then moved to Westfield with his younger children.

Frank Bedell, 23-years old when his parents moved to Westfield, had already established a career in the newspaper business on the frontier. However, in 1859 he left his job as a compositor for the *Crown Point Herald* in Indiana and joined his brothers in the operation of a livery business here.

He returned to the frontier in 1861, first to Iowa where he was telegraph editor of the *Dubuque Times*, then back to Indiana, where he purchased a share of the renamed *Crown Point Register*, becoming publisher in 1869. Staunchly Republican, Bedell came to know many influential businessmen and politicians, including Indiana Senator Benjamin Harrison (1833–1901), later President of the United States (1889–1893). In 1881, Bedell was appointed Post Office Inspector during the James Garfield administration.

Bedell married Leila Robinson in 1857 but left no descendants. His personal effects passed to his niece, Frances Bedell Watkins Wilcox. He is buried in Rosedale Cemetery in Los Angeles.