Hidden History: Oral History Interviews

Introduction:

Just like the events of today will affect tomorrow, the events of the past affected those that lived through them. It shaped the way they understood and perceived the world around them, and was a part of their daily conversations, just like your daily conversations with your friends.

In this project you will explore the ways the past shaped your local community and history. These projects, once completed, will be highlighted on the website of the Madison Historical Encyclopedia & Archive for future generations to learn about their local history.

Task:

Utilizing family members, friends, or acquaintances, you will explore an individual's experience of your local community, by conducting a ten-minute interview of someone's personal experience with the history of the community. To do this you will need to come up with a list of open ended questions, select an interviewee, conduct and record the interview, and finally transcribe your interview. This interview technique is called an Oral History.

Things to Consider: Conducting an Interview

- Select an individual to interview
  - Don't forget the interviewee must be connected to your local community
- Develop your questions
  - Ask open ended questions - Avoid questions with one word answers, get them to elaborate
- Remember - you have a job to do!
  - You are the interviewer, make sure you ask questions and guide the interviewee to connect their history to your knowledge of the local area
  - Take a list of questions and topics to discuss
    - If you know ahead of time they lived through a specific event or time period research it
  - Try to make sure there are no other sounds in the room - music, tv, pets
- Bring a recording device and record the interview
  - When you start the interview
    - record an introduction for yourself and the person you are interviewing, ex: "This is Sally Scott interviewing Mr. John Davis at his home, October 1st 2018"
  - It is very important to let them finish answering your question before you ask another
- Don't forget you need permission from your interviewee to post their interview on the Madison Historical Archive website