

Goldie at Home: Innovative Iowans

Activity Overview: The State Historical Society of Iowa is home to numerous oral history interviews with Iowans. Collecting oral history is a way to record memories and first-hand accounts from an individual with personal knowledge of a historical event. It allows history to be combined with storytelling, which is giving a human's perspective on history. This Goldie at Home: Innovative Iowans activity asks you to become a historian and record the past through a recorded oral history interview.

Connection to Iowa History

Iowa's history has been recorded in many different forms by historians over the years. Louise Frankel Rosenfield Noun spent her life preserving and sharing Iowa history. She was born in Des Moines to Meyer Rosenfield, owner of the Younker's department store, and Rose Frankel Rosenfield, a suffrage-supporting mother. Noun and Mary Louise Smith, the former chair of the Republican National Committee, worked together to found the [Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa Main Library](#). The archives include important manuscripts and papers which record women's history in Iowa. Louise Noun also authored numerous books and papers regarding feminist history in Iowa.



Tips for Oral History Interviews

- Choose how you want to record the interview. Will you digitally record with a cell phone or take notes?
- Start the interview with a specific topic in mind such as their childhood or a specific historical event they may have experienced during their lifetime.
- To begin asking about a topic, consider opening with a large question such as "Tell me about..." This encourages a more open-ended answer, so you can ask follow-up questions.
- Try to avoid yes or no questions. Ask questions that allow the interviewee space to elaborate.
- Allow the person time to talk. Do not interrupt. Wait until they are finished, and then ask follow-up questions.
- Having an outline of questions is helpful, but listen to the person and follow their train of thought. Build upon what they are saying. Follow-up questions are great to continue the conversation.

Instructions

- 1 Select.** Choose the person you would like to interview. It could be a family member, neighbor, teacher – anyone you might be interested to talk with.
- 2 Research.** Prior to the start of the interview, do some research about the person or the topic you would like to focus on. This will help guide questions.
- 3 Prepare and outline.** Using the provided [Oral History Interview Guide](#), prepare a general outline of the interview including questions you would like to ask the person. This does not need to be followed exactly, but it will be helpful to ensure you stay on topic.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

- [Oral History Interview Guide](#)
- Pencil or pen
- **Optional:** Recording device

Goldie at Home: Innovative Iowans

Instructions continued

- 4 **Reach out.** Set up a time with your chosen interviewee for the interview. It is helpful to send your outline to the interviewee beforehand so they can be prepared. This is also a good time to explain why you are requesting an interview and what you plan to do with the material following the interview.
- 5 **Interview.** During your time with the interviewee, be prepared to follow the outline but allow the interviewee to speak openly and freely. Be respectful of their time.
- 6 **Thank them.** Following the interview, send a thank you note to the individual you talked to.
- 7 **Compile notes.** Go over your notes and transcripts from the interview. If you would like, send a copy to the interviewee.
- 8 **Write.** Mold your interview into a biographical sketch about the person. Consider conducting interviews with other people and compiling the interviews together to create a combined oral history from various perspectives.
- 9 **Questions to Spark Learning**
 - Why do you think collecting oral history is important?
 - Why is it important to learn about history and historical events from people with different backgrounds and life experiences?
 - If you could interview one historic Iowan from the past, who would it be and why?
- 10 **Additional Resources**

Explore these resources below to learn more about preserving oral histories.

 - [Oral History Association](#)
 - [StoryCorps](#)
 - [The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide](#)
 - [Iowa Labor Oral History Project](#)
 - [Library of Congress: Veterans History Project](#)

Oral History Interview Guide

Date of Interview _____

Who is the interviewer? _____

Who is being interviewed? _____

What topic are you covering? _____

Question Section

Use this space to write your prepared questions for the interview. Consider starting with broad questions such as "where were you born" or "what was your childhood like" and moving into more direct questions.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____
