

THE PROJECT

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Students choose old family photographs and restore them using digital image manipulation software. They interview parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends, and research the history behind the photographs. They write original stories based on their interviews and research.

“I often reminisce about my past and the decision that completely changed my life. I am Ines Cordeiro, and it still seems like only yesterday that I, along with my husband and six children immigrated to Canada, searching for a safe and more financially secure future. It was a difficult ordeal, filled with ups and downs, but with an ending magical enough to be that of a fairy tale.”



**TOP: Before Restoration
BOTTOM: After Restoration**

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Students gather information about social, historical, and geographical contexts to write short historical vignettes called “Footprints” that relate to the theme of the stories. What is exciting for the students is finding historical information that relates to their families and cultural groups. This allows the teachers to easily integrate history into this project.

“Born in 1823, Matthew Brady was one of the first wartime photographers. As a young man, Brady met Samuel Morse, who taught him about the daguerreotype process. During the civil war, Brady decided to make a photographic record of it.”

AT A GLANCE

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For students researching their family histories, rifling through shoe boxes filled with pictures and documents was much like excavating an ancient Egyptian pyramid. The archaeologists working in both the shoebox and the pyramid unearthed artifacts that might have been long forgotten but are none-the-less valuable to the understanding of a family and, ultimately, a civilization.

All the artifacts that adorn the pages of this book are old, yellowed and fragile as porcelain dolls. But in addition to showing their age, they show how much they have been loved and cherished. The fine lines in a fifty year old marriage certificate are made after it's been folded, unfolded and admired both as an achievement and a reminder of a different time and a different place.



Portuguese identification card, 1960

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It all started with a journey, a journey of self-discovery of who we are and where we come from. Bringing together stories, photographs, artifacts and going through the process of creating the book/magazine is what made this journey possible. The emotional content of the stories was written with the soul, the mind and the heart. Some brought tears, others smiles, and some even fear; but most of all, the stories were expressed through the human emotion of fulfillment. Under the heading “Reflection,” students express their thoughts, impressions of the project and how this experience has not only enriched their spirits, but guided them through a very small part of this journey of self-discovery.

“I rubbed my eyes as I stumbled to find words to explain my experience in writing a story about my great-grandmother. I had been thinking of how I felt towards the project all night and the only thing that came to mind was a lot of work. It is then that I opened my eyes to see these daily taken-for-granted aspects of my life that I have never paid much personal attention to: traditions. It is certain traditions that I have been raised with that have molded me into what I am today.”