

## **The Authors Corner**

by Dutch Rhudy

A Warm Spring Welcome to All.

March is an interesting month. We spring forward to wake up in the dark. Hope we survive another Friday the 13th. Face the Ides of March. Pretend we are all Irish by the Wearing O' the Green. Rejoice when Spring finally arrives, then grumble because the ill maintained lawn mower won't start.

I received so many e-mails and on-line questions, I've decided to send this months newsletter a few days early. Perhaps stay ahead of my many commitments for this month in the process.

Last months issue prompted many to ask, "How do you keep track of it all?" So this months Topic is a simple overview of how I use FREEMIND, a wonderful Mind Mapping tool.

Many tutorials and videos are found on-line, which teach the generic layout and features of FreeMind, from the basic skills to its more complex features. At first glance, FreeMind appears overly simplistic, and of little use for authors. I felt the same way the first time I downloaded FreeMind, and moved it over to the family computer for others to take it for a test drive.

My wife combined her favorite recipes from many cookbooks, and placed several in multiple categories. One recipe for a dish properly filed under Meats, she had linked to Five Minute Meals, and also to Appetizers. For each recipe she had an image of the dish, the recipe itself, which includes the ingredients list, plus a short printable shopping list. Another note card kept track of the times when she prepared this dish, and which friends and relatives she shared the recipe with.

Prior to seeing how she used FreeMind with her recipes, I had used a simple tree based, text only notepad named Kabikaboo. Their new release introduced a few annoying glitches to the program, and I was on the hunt for something better. I wasted a whole month of valuable writing time trying programs like Story Book, Scrivener, and others. Scrivener was the most promising, if I had the time to study courses on how to use it most effectively. Its biggest drawback besides the time factor, is its rigidity.

FreeMind begins with a single bubble, from which stem the other bubbles you add while building your hierarchial tree. It only took me two weekend evenings to copy all the data from several other note taking programs into FreeMind. My initial set-up did not matter, because every bubble can be moved anywhere on the tree at any time.

In my presentation below, I do not get into the fancy features of FreeMind, because I use it for speed, convenience, and for maintaining all of my notes and research data at my fingertips while writing.

FreeMind's overly simple single bubble beginning, instantly became the heart for all my work. I keep everything in it, including links to my WIP, so I can access it directly from FreeMind.

As they say, pictures are worth a thousand words. A simple explanation with each image will suffice for this presentation on how I use FreeMind. And without getting into the bells and whistles the makers have provided for our use.

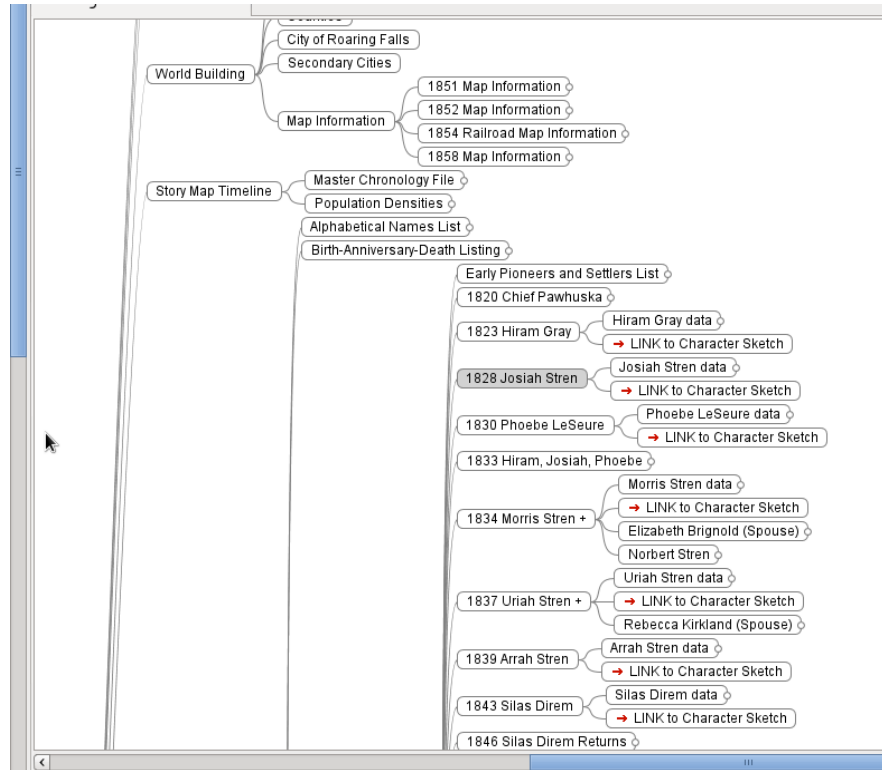
Familiar with the Kabikaboo type filing system, and from storing data on computer hard drives, I've grown accustomed to using the standard organizational tree format.

Pictured on the left is a small sampling of my overall tree based layout, with many tiers expanded to show the convenient format. I purposely made it small because it is unreadable reduced to this size anyhow. Normally, only the section in use is expanded to make access to each tier faster.

A close-up image from near the top of the tree shows a few of the tiers. World Building, Story Map Timeline, and Chronology are three totally separate tiers, but all accessed from the original opening FreeMind bubble.

World Building, Story Map Timeline, and Chronology are three totally separate tiers, but all accessed from the original opening FreeMind bubble.

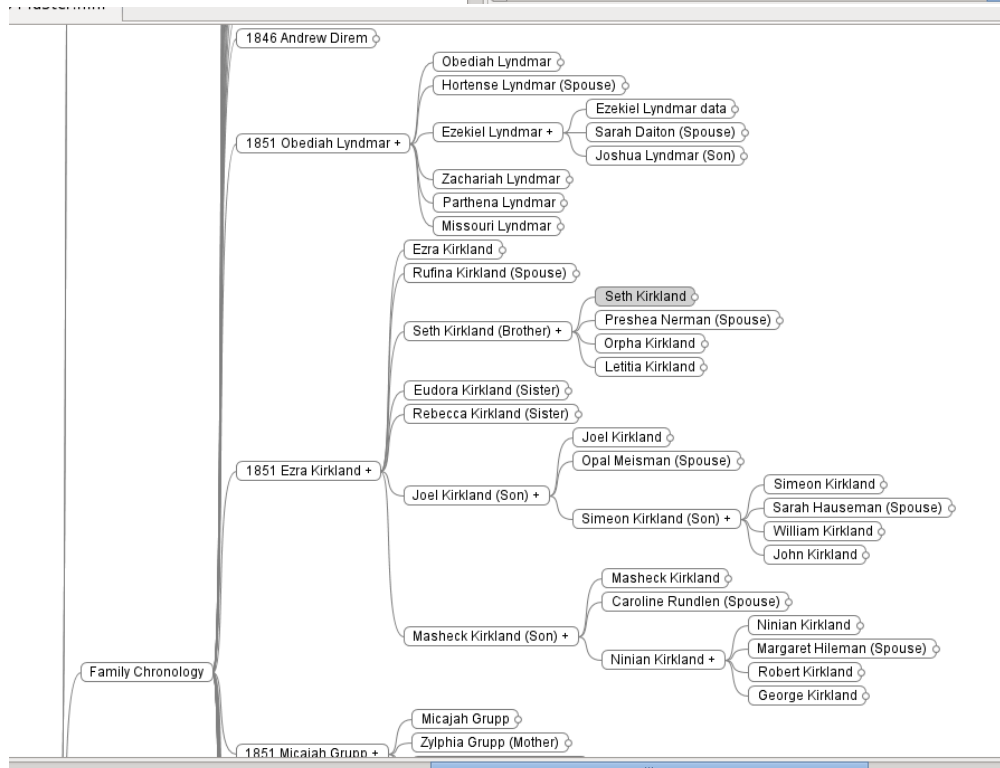
The bubbles with Red Arrows open the internal file in the program which created it. Character Sketches are maintained in OpenOffice Writer. I can access these from the file folder they are stored, or use the Link created in FreeMind.



The Roaring Falls Series spans over 175 years. Which dictates I keep track of the chronology for each family, pet, home, etc. found in Roaring Falls.

Chronology is the timeline wherein the changes take place. Included in the timeline are the plot lines which are linked back internally to the Master Chronology file.

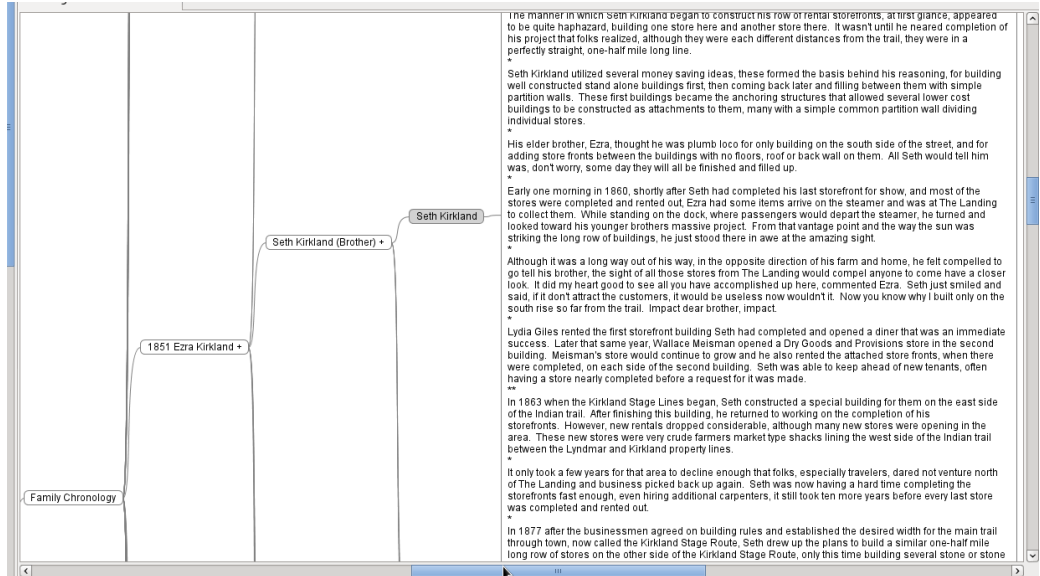
The grayed bubble for Seth Kirkland is opened in the image below.



I keep my rough draft data in a continuous running page so I can scroll up and down.

You also have the option of using fixed size pages, screen size, or like post-it notes or index cards.

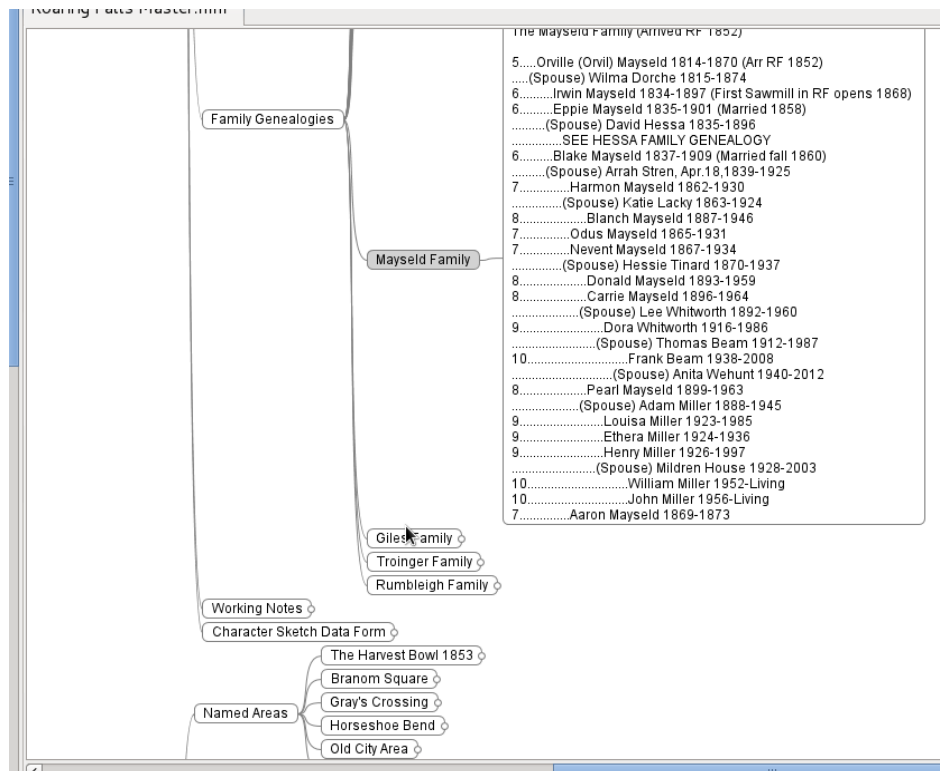
A truncated version of each characters actions and plot within the story are held in this section.



Internal links may also be added to their timeline, character sketch, location sketch, scene sketch, etc. However, I found it easier to maintain this my notes section as simple as possible, and use hyperlinks within the OpenOffice Writer documents where the actual rough draft writing takes place.

When I click on a bubble linked to an OpenOffice Writer document, it opens OpenOffice Writer over FreeMind, so a screen shot of an opened document would show only the document in its native format. When I open a drawing, such as one of the maps seen on this website, it opens in the graphics program.

I can open and work on a document directly from the folder it is stored in, or by using a FreeMind bubble which is linked to the document. It is the same document and opened in its creation program.

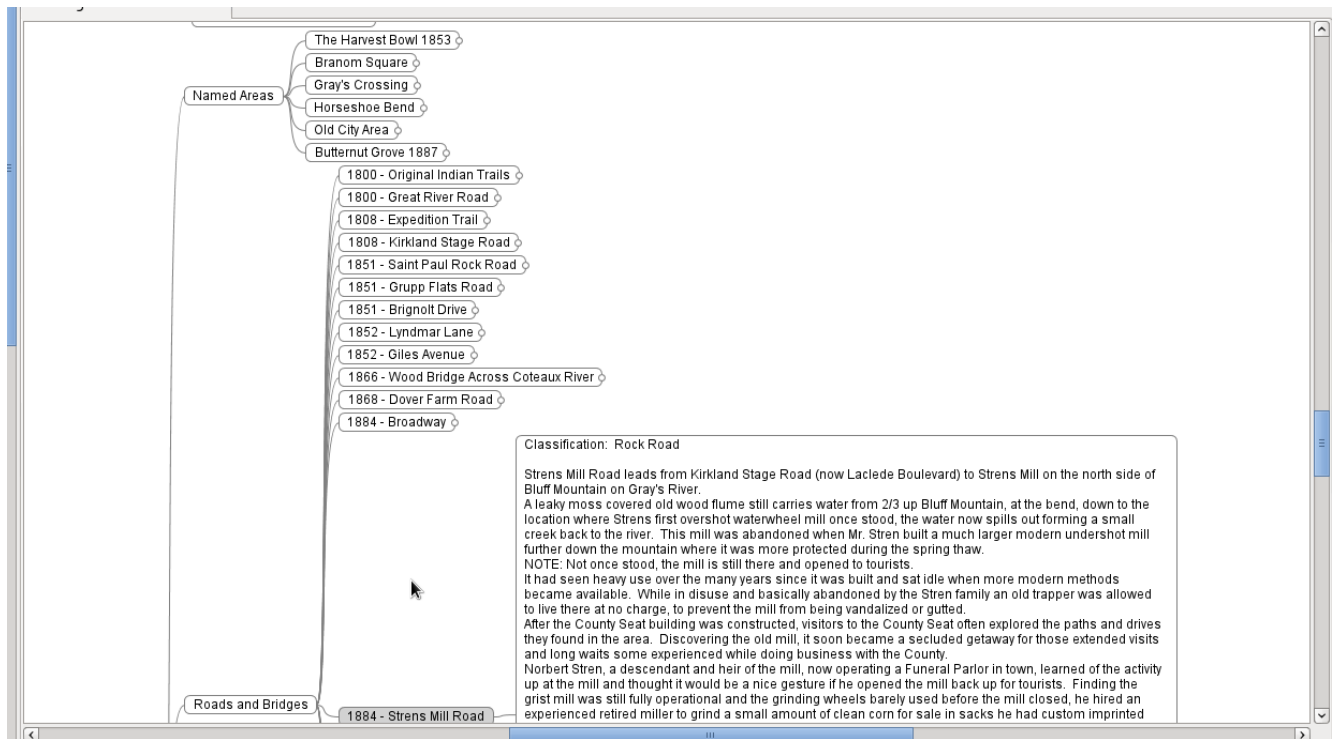


For this image I selected the smallest family genealogy table in my file, to prevent the layout tree from disappearing off the screen.

Whether a character is used in the story or not, I have developed full and complete genealogies for most of the initial founding characters, from birth to present day.

As you can see by the early dates, and starting with a single lone pioneer in the wilderness. Massive genealogies are necessary to provide spouses within proper age ranges, at a time when travel was rare.

Roaring Falls begins as a wilderness, and the only roads were the few Indian trails used for hunting. An expedition blazed the first east to west trail, which later transformed to the Kirkland Stage Route. As settlers moved to the area, dirt paths connected farms to marketplace, and these eventually became roads. Dirt roads were improved, first with gravel, then tar and gravel, and finally paving.



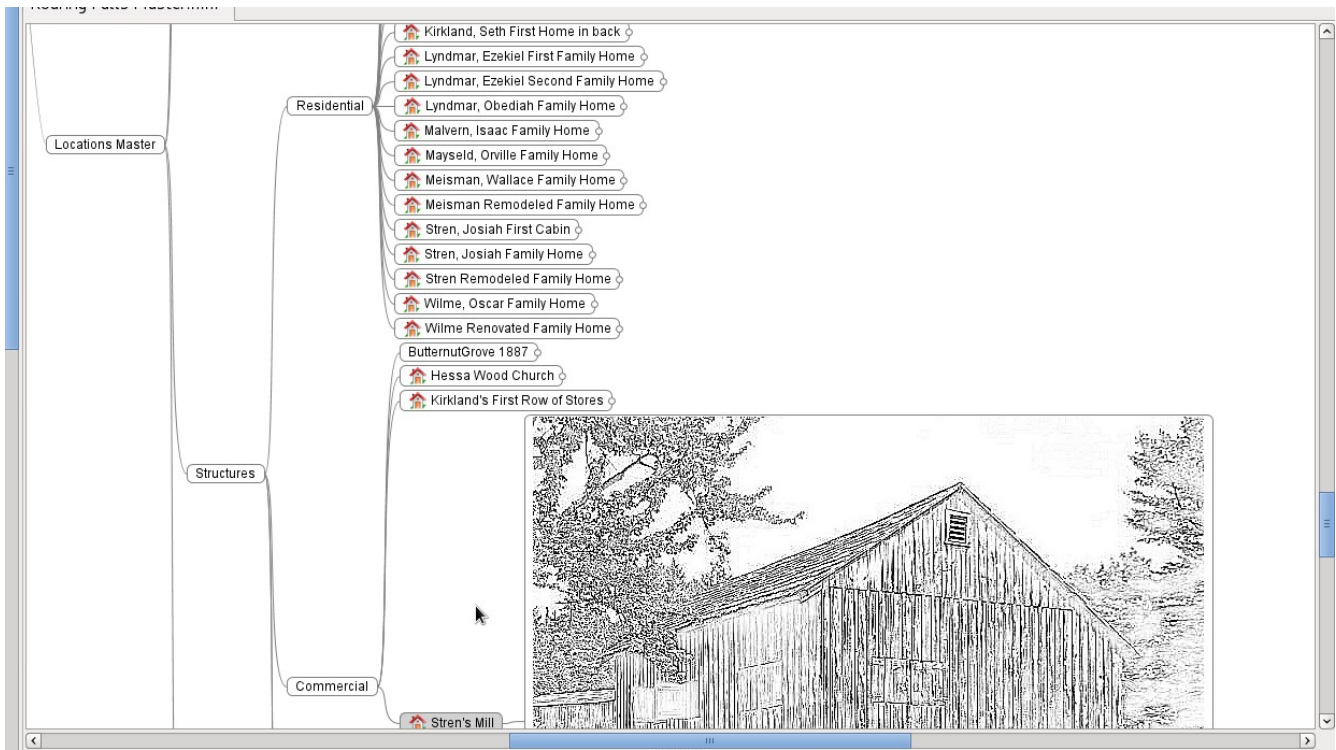
Time and progress is continually moving forward. Many changes take place, some roads become major thoroughfares, new highways are built in the area, and even a railroad finds its way through Roaring Falls. Each change falls on the timeline, and must be recorded in the chronology of events.

Original cabins are razed and replaced with larger homes, which in turn are either renovated, razed, or continue on until they become important historical structures, and elements of the cities rich heritage and past. As land is divided to heirs, or areas become prime commercial property and malls are built, some original roads are abandoned, or their course changed to meet traffic demands.

Every bit of data I ever collected, especially my early backstory work, and world building attempts before modification or relocation to a new area of the country, are maintained in a Secondary Master file. Backstory elements I reworked to meet the demands and requirements of the new location, and as they apply to my new story are stored in a bubble I named Early Backstory Notes.

The sections of my FreeMind tree are divided into manageable eras, roughly corresponding with each book in the series. The bubbles displaying the house icon in the screenshot below show the bubble is linked to an image file. My Locations Master file is slightly different than the section broken into eras, and contains all first pre-1900 structures.

These sketches of homes and other structures are only for my personal reference use when writing the early history of Roaring Falls. I chose the Stren's Mill image to display, because it is embedded in FreeMind, rather than opening the imaging program used to create the drawing. The second Stren Mill and later modifications to each, appear in the Era Section for the decade in which the changes occurred.



We have reached the bottom of the tree, this is where most of my actual work takes place. I have the Master Overarching Outline, and within this bubble are the individual outlines for each book and chapter.

The complete History of Roaring Falls from the first pioneer to present day in rough draft form. This book is currently only used for reference, but may be released as a prequel at some future date.

The Historical Series and Mystery Series books are separate sections within the FreeMind tree. The original first rough draft, before determining break points for each book, is maintained intact as written.

Due to the size of the story, details involved, and number of books in the series, my FreeMind mind map is much larger than required for a single novel.

My goal was to show how I set up FreeMind in hierarchal tree fashion for my own use, and how the tree displays on the screen. From the initial first FreeMind bubble, you can build on both sides of the bubble, or anywhere on the page. How you want it to appear is almost unlimited.

Your FreeMind map can be converted to HTML and placed on a website with all links functional. I had a simple version on-line for a short time, but removed it along with all the rest of the spoilers. I hope I succeeded in showing how valuable the FreeMind mind mapping program is to authors.

Respectfully Submitted

Dutch Rhudy

