



Enjoying Your Family History

Connecting with your family's history can provide a feeling of heritage and meaning to your life. It can help your family celebrate and enlarge its strengths. It can also be a great adventure.

Start with what you have. You probably have more history than you realize. You may have a box of papers from your school days. Maybe you have a cherished photo you inherited from your mother or a hand tool you received from your father. Gather up the things you have. Organize them. Find a way to integrate them into your life. You might find just the right frame for your mother's photo or a shadowbox in which to display the tool from your father. Make them the symbols of good things you have inherited from your family.

The next step is to explore. Talk with extended family members about family history they may have. Your aunt may have a box of papers and letters from your grandfather. She may be willing to give it to you if you will organize its contents. Or she may be willing to have you borrow it to read the letters and journals.

Exploring also includes talking with people about the stories and traditions that they remember. You can record your grandmother telling about her babies or your grandfather singing a childhood song. Capture the richness of the memories and personalities.

Some people like to explore their genealogy across generations. There are now many online resources that give you access to extensive records. Try typing "genealogy" or "family search" into your web search engine and you will surely find enough resources to keep you exploring for a long time.

In the course of studying your history you will certainly discover warts and wars. Discovering your ancestors' flaws can be dismaying but it can also remind us that all of us are in a learning process. We can learn from their mistakes and celebrate the good that we discover.

Record your story. Some people love to keep a journal. Most people never get around to it. Yet each of us can keep a record in a way that works for us. Some people scribble a few notes about the events of each day on a calendar. Some drop cards, programs and other memorabilia into a file. Some make illustrations in an art book. Some take lots of pictures. Some make scrapbooks. Some track their story by the letters they write to family members. Some people record their story on audio or video formats. Find a way that works for you to record the story of your life.

Use your family history. Rather than bury our family history in a storage room, we can make it a part of our lives. We can make a heritage wall with pictures and mementos from our ancestors. We can put a favorite object from a favorite relative on our desk or mantle. We can frame special documents and put them by the side of our bed. We can copy cherished letters and histories and

share them with other family members. There are great benefits from connecting with our family history.

Applications:

What are some of the family history resources that you already have? How can you use them better or enjoy them more?

What are some of the family history resources (people, records, and objects) available in your extended family?

What is the best way for you to record your personal history?

Do you have childhood objects that mean a lot to you - maybe an old trike or a baby gown or a toy? Can you use them in your daily life in a way that will remind you of good experiences in your life?

How can you help your own children keep a record of their lives? You might record important events for them when they are small. You might also take pictures. You might save objects they will one day cherish. You can also display their works of art and photos.

Some popular family history web sites include: [Kindred Konnections](#); [FamilySearch.org](#); [Ancestry](#); [Genealogy.com](#)