

CHAPTER 4

**3-Easy Steps**

Follow These 3-Easy Steps to Begin Building Your Family Tree and Connect to Your Ancestors

STEP 3 - Connect With the Lives of Your Ancestors

DISCOVER YOUR FAMILY HERITAGE, STORIES, AND PHOTOS



Family history is more than just names and dates. You should learn more about who your ancestors really were, where they lived, and what they did. You should try to gain information and an understanding of each of your ancestors if possible. Finding your roots and stories helps you gain a sense of belonging, and an understanding of who you are and where you come from.

The Internet is the perfect tool for opening a window to the past and connecting with the lives and stories of your ancestors. Discover more than you ever imagined about the lives of your ancestors that made you who you are today.

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Suggested Activities

1. Consider ways your family can best honor and pay tribute to your ancestors and inspire your children to know them.
2. Establish a new tradition in your family for honoring your ancestors which can be perpetuated from generation-to-generation.
3. Create a timeline of one or more of your ancestors lives combined with historical events to get to know the times in which they lived.
4. Visit the cemetery and gravesite of an ancestor(s) to better connect with them.



Connect With the Lives of Your Ancestors

DISCOVER YOUR FAMILY HERITAGE, STORIES, AND PHOTOS



Published family histories can help you make connections between generations. Timelines of your ancestor's

lives in context with historical events—along with photographs of the times in which your ancestors lived—can provide an interesting perspective and add life to your story. Historic newspapers and periodicals provide unique insight and a rare opportunity to understand the culture and customs of how your ancestors lived. Online gazetteers (geographical dictionaries) and place databases help you discover the geographic location of the place your ancestors called home—their village or town and cemetery.

Discovering your ancestor's health history can be a useful tool to aid you in interpreting patterns of health, illness and genetic traits for you and your descendants. Learning how to care for your precious photos will help preserve the past for future generations. And perhaps discovering that you descended from royalty or related to someone famous may just 'make your day'.

Finding your family roots—and the stories, values and traditions about your ancestor's lives—can help you better understand them. But it also helps you better understand yourself, and gives you a

Benefits of Connecting With the Lives and Stories of Your Ancestors

- **Knowledge** of your forebears will increase
- **Better Understand** your ancestors and yourself; the opportunity to learn more about your kindred dead will bless lives
- Gain a **Greater Appreciation** of your heritage, the sacrifices your ancestors made for you, and a better understanding of what their life was like
- **Gain Strength** from learning about how your ancestors met challenges in life
- Unite, weld, and **Strengthen Bonds** between family members forever; your family will grow closer
- Promote a **Sense of Belonging** that ties generations together, and foreshadows your belonging in the eternal family of God; your desire and willingness to honor your beloved ancestors prepares you to belong to Him who is our Father
- **Discover** within yourself a reservoir of patience, endurance, and love that you will never find without the deep commitment that grows from a sense of real belonging
- Gain a **Sense of Identity and Purpose in Life**
- Draw yourself and your family **Closer to God**
- Your ties with the eternal world suddenly become very real, **Sharpening Your Life's Focus** and lifting your expectations
- Exerting such immovable loyalty to your forebears teaches you how to love—indeed, how to be **More Christ-like**

greater appreciation of your heritage and the sacrifices they made for you. Many of your ambitions and challenges in life are the same as theirs. You gain strength from learning about how your ancestors met life's troubling challenges.

Doing family history work helps unite your family, and strengthens bonds between your family members. Knowledge of your forebears will increase, your family will grow closer, families will be strengthened, and the opportunity to learn more about your kindred dead will bless lives. As you learn more about your ancestors, you weld eternal family links, and draw yourself and your family closer to God. It's a wonderful opportunity to find your family identity. And help promote that identity in your children and grand children.

Appreciating Your Heritage

Reflecting on the Past

Who were your ancestors? Each of us has hundreds of thousands of ancestors as part of our unique heritage. And each and every one of your ancestors had to exist in order for you to exist. Each one of them and everything they were have contributed to your being. Their genes are in you; their blood runs in your veins. You not only inherited their genes, but many of their physical traits, values and attitudes have been passed down to you from one generation to another showing up in the way you look, think, and act. The choices made by your ancestors over the generations have influenced the way you live and think. In many ways, your ancestors have affected your life and molded your destiny. They are a part of who you are today. It took thousands of years of people having children with the right person at the right time to get to your existence.



Your ancestors are more than just a bunch of lifeless names and dates on a chart. They made a huge difference in who you are. And still do! But it is strange how little most of us know about them or the times in which they lived. Most certainly, many of your ancestors lived a life of deprivation and hardship. Most of them sacrificed much for their posterity. Many left

behind beloved family members, plush homelands, and previous possessions to come to often a barren, undeveloped strange land so that their descendants could have a better life. By tracing your own family roots and stories, you can come to appreciate your heritage more and more, and know and honor your forefathers as you discover what their lives were like.

Some people find great joy in discovering an ancestor's diary, journal or letter to help find their roots and collect their family traditions and stories. But usually it's the small bits of information from many different sources that help bring your ancestors to life. Everyone has his own unique history and family stories. And finding your family roots and treasured stories is one of the most meaningful ways you can honor your ancestors. You can honor those who have gone before by learning more about them and following in their footsteps. And you should be grateful for the rich abundance you enjoy today because of their great sacrifices and efforts. They helped forge a life that is so much better for you than anything they might have even dared dream about for themselves.

They deserve your recognition and honor for the determination and fortitude they portrayed in leaving the comfort of their home and emigrating to the New World to forge a new life. Your ancestors labored long and hard, built their own home with their own bare hands, and raised a family and created their own livelihood. They became pilgrims and pioneers and cowboys who etched out a new life for themselves. They had great dreams and aspirations which wielded a profound influence on the future, just like you. You should honor your forbears for who they were, what they accomplished, and even the mistakes they made. One of the great lessons—maybe the principal lesson—of doing family history is learning from the mistakes of your ancestors. Tracing your family roots and connecting to your ancestors can be one of the most intellectually stimulating, absorbing, and fulfilling ways you will ever find to spend your valuable time.