

Preface



About this Fourth Edition

You are about to embark on a fascinating journey that will take you back into history and forward into the eternities. Never has there

been a more exciting time to trace your roots and connect with your ancestors. Computers, technology, and the Internet have dramatically affected how we do family history today.

Technology and the Internet have continued to change rapidly and continues even at a faster rate today, hence the need to keep abreast of new exciting web sites, new resources, tools, and technology. We received many positive and gratifying responses from many people about the first three editions of this book (published 2003, 2005, and 2009).

This new edition is an updated version to help keep you abreast of the dynamic changes and progress in tracing your family roots and stories, empower you with these wonderful new resources, and make it easier and more fun for you. And by providing a traditional sewn binding – instead of the unique binding of the previous editions – it is more appropriate and acceptable for use in libraries.

In addition to this updated edition, we have developed a new companion



website, **EasyFamilyHistory.com**, to help keep you up-to-date and provide convenient hotlinks to all the web sites provided herein and beyond this printing. I believe that this new Web site and guidebook are “the easiest way to your family history”.

Also, this illustrated guidebook is a comprehensive resource directory on family history. It provides thousands of extremely valuable, reviewed resources *not conveniently found elsewhere*, all in one location to help trace your family roots and stories, and make it easier to connect to your beloved ancestors. However, it is not a beginner’s guide on using software or the computer. I anticipated that you already know something about computers and basic software. My intention is to try and make things simple and

understandable for you; I want to help make the process of learning how to plant your family tree, nurture it, and help it grow *as easy as possible using today’s technology.*



How This Book Came To Be

Have you ever had a moment where you were given a thought or an idea that could change your life? You know, one of those moments where you were prompted by an unseen but real force to do something that you never really thought about doing before.

My wife and I were out one evening, and we ended up at a bookstore just browsing and enjoying the evening together when out-of-the-blue a strong premonition or feeling hit me that I should write a book about family history.

I just about fell on the floor in the middle of the store because this was such an extremely foreign thought to me. I had absolutely no inclination whatsoever about doing any such thing as I was completely involved in a new business at the time – a new marketing company that I had recently started. I was essentially overwhelmed with this new business, and struggling to make it grow and become successful. Indeed, I was struggling to just survive, let alone make a living.

But this was a very strong feeling and I just couldn’t shake it: “*You have the ability to write a book about family history, and there will be nothing like it in the marketplace.*” I even had a great idea for the title, *A Crash Course in Family History*.

At first I was really taken back, but then I started thinking to myself. *Well, I am involved in teaching classes about how to do family history in today’s tech world right now, and I have created lessons to teach these classes. I reasoned, these lessons could become the basis for the book, and there currently is no up-to-date book in the marketplace on how to do family history using today’s technology.*

I was quite aware of family history books and other resources available in the marketplace at the

Some people differentiate between the terms *genealogy* and *family history*; genealogy meaning an account of kinship, and family history meaning the addition of details about lives and historical context.



time because I had been searching for resources to teach my class, and had come to the conclusion that there was no simple, convenient guidebook that really explained what helps were available for family history and how to use them. I had previously felt a great need and desire for people everywhere to easily learn how to do family history.

I reasoned with myself for a few moments, then I made an on-the-spot decision. "OK I'll do it! I'll write a book on family history. I'll make it easy to follow, a simple step-by-step approach, and done in my own style with lots of colorful illustrations." I don't know if I responded to myself out loud or just in my mind. In any case, I committed myself to do something I had never thought about before. I've written several small books before, but not on a subject that seemingly came "out-of-the-blue".

As we were driving home, I was going over in my mind how I could reorganize my time to be able to accomplish this. I decided that I would get up early each morning around 4 a.m. when my mind was fresh to try and fit it into my busy schedule. I did this and wrote until 8 or 9 a.m. then went to my day job.

It was an *amazing experience and blessing* to write the book. It was such a refreshing time; no sounds or distractions and nobody around at that early hour. I was able to focus with a totally open mind. It was magic. The words and thoughts just came



Family history is enjoying a worldwide revolutionary wave.

into my mind and I could type as fast as they came to me. It was a wonderful and thrilling experience! It took me about a year to write the first edition of this book even though it had taken some months previously to create the class lessons.

I readily confess that I learned a lot about family history from writing the book that I didn't know before about how we are to connect to our ancestors today. And I was *absolutely astounded* at the many new technological tools and resources that are available to help us trace our family roots and stories.

A Family History/ Computer Revolution

There is indeed a *revolutionary wave of interest* in family history around the entire world, including the availability of new exciting, advanced technology, resources and records. Dick Eastman, author of the premium *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter*, a daily electronic publication with more than 50,000 readers located at www.eogn.com recently wrote this about the computer revolution going on in family history today.



Dick Eastman

"We are in the midst of a computer revolution...in genealogy... The "islands" of genealogy data on individual hard drives are merging into...very large online databases, accessible to thousands... simultaneously.... Online, web-based collaborative databases [are]... happening now.... This is a very exciting time to be a computer-using genealogist!"

Dick Eastman, January 17, 2010

http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2010/01/a-new-computer-revolution-is-rising-around-us.html

Objectives of This Book

My main objectives for writing this book are to:

1. Describe and illustrate the new, easy, simplified process of how to do family history in an interesting step-by-step

method that can be understood and followed by everyone.

2. Help people readily identify and link their ancestors, and work together as they identify names, and reduce duplication of the work.
3. Broaden the number of people connecting with their ancestors, and gain insight and strength by learning how ancestors met life's challenges.

I hope that this new fourth edition and companion web site are valuable resources and guides to assist you in planting your family tree, connecting to your ancestors, discovering your family heritage, stories and photos, and blessing the lives of your family in the process.

How This Book is Organized

This is a fun “workbook” that tries to make it easier for you to connect to your ancestors, and hopefully fulfills a need in the genealogy community. It provides easily digestible bits of information throughout the book with guidelines, tips, and lots of resources that are visually appealing, easy to understand, and easy to follow. You can skip around in the book to areas that interest you most if you want...and not skip a beat.

For example, you can jump right into the *Best of the Internet* in chapter 5 and start surfing if you wish. It identifies Web sites that are **FREE** and those that require you to pay a fee. If some of the content on a Web site requires a fee, I've marked it with an **\$**. Or you can start digging into *Organizing Your Information* in chapter 6. To begin with, you may want to at least get started on getting organized and archiving your precious photos because it makes you feel great to be organized, and staying organized is a continual work-in-process.

After getting your feet wet with the introduction, you should begin with the 3-Easy-Steps to begin building your family tree (chapters 1-3).

STEP 1: *Identify Your Ancestors Using Your Family* (chapter 1) is the easiest part because you're actually planting your family tree and interacting with your family in the process.

STEP 2: *Add New Branches to Your Family Tree Using the Internet* (chapter 2) will help you see if someone has already found information on your family roots. No sense re-plowing a field that has been plowed. It will also help you gather lots of information on your ancestors.

STEP 3: *Connect With the Lives and Stories of Your Ancestors* (chapter 3) helps you discover your family heritage, stories and photos; enumerates the many benefits of connecting with your ancestors; and aids you in appreciating your heritage and honoring your ancestors.

Thereafter, you'll surely want to *Share Your Family History* with family and friends (chapter 8) which provides many valuable resources to assist you. And chapter 7 offers many suggestions and resources for *Keeping Your Own History*, mostly leaving an enduring legacy you can pass on to your posterity, and building a bridge between generations.

Keep in mind that this step-by-step guidebook deals largely with tracing your family roots using *today's technology*, but is somewhat skimpy on other very valuable resources such as genealogical and historical societies, archives, public libraries, family history expos/conventions, institutes, etc. which can be among your very best resources and allows you to rub shoulders with others who have similar interests.

One more thing, it contains many valuable resources for UK, Canada, Mexico, and Europe, but there are more resources and guides for doing family history in America. Other editions are on the drawing board.

I hope that this new edition and companion Web site are valuable resources and guides to assist you in planting your family tree, connecting to your ancestors, and discovering your family heritage and stories while benefitting the lives of your family in the process.



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