

## *Genealogy: Enjoy the Process of Finding Your Origins*



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Although we humans as a species may not obsess every day about where we came from, it's a very real part of our human nature to ponder our origins. Call it curiosity, a delight in personal history, or as one person recently posted, a feeling that "my dearly departed kinfolk keep tuggin' at me."

"Genealogy," the study of family histories, has long been a popular hobby for Americans, especially among seniors. Since our country was founded, an estimated 100 million Americans have attempted to trace the origin of their families. Now, more than ever, there are services and technologies to help people in their search.

The most popular and well-known website for tracing one's family roots, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), touts itself as the "world's largest online family history resource." If using is believing, I'm a believer. The site is user-friendly and provides an amazing array of options for tracking down family members around the world, including census and voter lists, tax records, soldier rolls, crew lists, border crossing and passports, criminal and court records, obituaries, and even ship pictures and descriptions.

Tracking down real documents in your own or a relative's home town can also provide a wealth of information. Old photos, keepsakes, and legal documents such as immigration cards, marriage and death certificates, and property deeds can tell wonderful stories about who our ancestors were and where they lived. Church records, census data, and draft records can also shine a telltale light on a family's past.

Many times the best answers to our queries about the past come simply from asking the right questions. Nothing can replace the spoken word or oral tradition from family elders, many of whom are living, breathing libraries of history.

Your search for your origins might encompass finding out every detail possible, filling in every leaf on that proverbial family tree. Or, you might just want a fuller picture of one special great uncle. Whatever the path you choose to investigate, the project is often more enjoyable and memorable when a family's oldest and youngest members work together. One generation offers a glimpse of where you came from, while the other provides a peek at where you're going. Enjoy!

Keeping the promise,



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