

Your Roots Can Be Found With a Family Tree

What is a Family Tree? A family tree is like a pedigree for human beings. It is used to record the individual's ancestors over a number of generations. Family trees can be very simple, recording only immediate ancestors. They may also be very elaborate, recording siblings and intermarriages, resulting in a far more detailed version of the individual's history. An individual might choose to pursue his or her own edification, or it may be pursued to answer medical questions or other questions the individual may have pertaining to his or her family history. A family tree is also known as a "genealogical tree."

What is Genealogy? Genealogy is the study of the family tree(s) of a family or of families. Although most people seem to concentrate on their own family tree, there are some people who simply enjoy creating genealogical records. Genealogy research is becoming an increasingly popular hobby, with online search sites and "how-to" information springing up all over the Internet.

How do I get Started in Genealogy Research? Organizations of interest to genealogy hobbyist are easy to find. Some only require a simple search through the yellow pages of your phone book. If it is not possible to find one there, then Internet organizations are a simple keystroke away. It is not necessary to join an organization; however, having other contacts may make it easier and less expensive if you have people can help you in your research.

Begin by interviewing any living relatives that you have, who might be able to provide you with names and photographs of people over several generations. Doing complete interviews instead of those that simply track dates of births, marriages, and deaths will help you understand your family a bit better--and may lead to fascinating stories as well. After all, isn't that what you're interested in? Facts and dates are wonderful, but understanding why Aunt Martha was the "Marietta Belle" is probably worth a hundred of those things.

Once you have those things in hand, start searching databases for more information. Census records can provide a good idea of people's movements during life, while obituaries and special death indices can help you track your ancestors after they have died. Not all of these data bases and indices are free of charge, but most are reasonably priced. Don't be afraid to pay for information. Most of the best sources do charge for their information and you will get your money's worth if you pay.

Unlike the past, in which it was necessary to engage in extensive library research, letter-writing campaigns, or travel to find results, all the amateur genealogist need do is log onto the Internet and start searching data bases. As you proceed with your research, be certain to carefully record your results in a family tree chart, either over the Internet or by hand on a paper chart. No matter which method you choose, make certain to keep a backup of your work. If you prefer to record things by hand, then make certain you keep a record of whatever shorthand you may use and whatever sources that you used to find your material. Once you get started, it won't be long before you have a fascinating insight on your family that your family can consult for generations to come.

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