

## Passing Down Family Memories To Future Generations

By Karen McBride

There are many choices to make throughout the day – tall or grande? Paper or plastic? Do you want that “supersized”? But there is one choice that you don’t get to make – your family.

With the holiday season upon us, why not take this time to learn more about your family? As you are sitting around the dinner table, ask family members to share stories of their favorite childhood memories or funny anecdotes of past family gatherings and enjoy reliving the moments together.

These stories, passed down from generation to generation, are not only a great way to spend time together, but can be used to start your genealogical chart. Genealogy is “the study of families and lineage, used to determine one’s heritage.” In earlier times, it was used to determine if you were related to a royal. A coat of arms is a symbol of a family’s heritage. In the 12th century, a coat of arms was used as a way to determine friend from foe during battle. Each knight chose symbols to represent his family. The colors on the coat of arms have different meanings:

- Silver / White – truth, sincerity, peace, innocence and purity.
- Gold – wisdom, generosity, glory, constancy and faith.
- Black – wisdom, grief.
- Green – abundance, joy, hope and loyalty in love.
- Blue – loyalty, chastity, truth, strength and faith.
- Red – military strength, warrior and martyr.
- Purple – regal, justice, royal majesty, and sovereignty.
- Maroon - fortitude or victorious.
- Orange – ambition.

In the 19th century, John Farmer began a system for tracing one’s heritage in the United States. Early Americans hoped to be linked to the founding fathers.

The Genealogy Society of Utah was founded in 1894. It was the largest genealogical record-gathering program in the world. The Society was later renamed to Family History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Genealogical societies are now all over the world. D. Joshua Taylor, Vice President and incoming 2013 President of Administration for the Federation of Genealogical Societies, was the guest speaker at the 2012 Fall Seminar of the Florida Genealogical Society, Inc. He has been a featured genealogist on NBC’s Who Do You Think You Are? with Sarah Jessica Parker, Ashley Judd, Reba McIntire and Rob Lowe.

His grandmother instilled in him an interest in genealogy as a child. He would spend summers with his grandparents and they would tour the country gathering research. To this day, they continue to work together on projects, combining his digital files, with her traditional binder bound documents. Each document is numbered and entered into a database for easy reference. His exceptional organizational techniques are due to his training as a professional librarian.

To learn more about your family history, you don’t have to endure sorting through boxes in cramped, musty old basements of churches or town halls (although true genealogists do). Many records can be found online. You may have heard of some of the popular websites, such as [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), [www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com), and [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), but there are other ways to find out more about your family history.

Online newspapers can be searched, starting with the day your relative was born. Find out who the President was at the time and other worldly events. Continue to read the papers, every 10 years or so, to get a feel for the time period.

If there are legends in your

history, such as “George Washington slept here”, in addition to reading online newspapers, you can visit your local library to find journals and local papers from that time period that may not be available online. Finding information about your family history involves some detective work. Check your town hall for records to find the original date the house or hotel was built to see if it coincides with the date(s) when Washington visited the town. Your ancestors may have even left diaries and letters for you to review. Search the old trunks left in the corner of grandma’s attics for these relics.

State historical societies can be helpful in your research. Approach your research with a plan. You can get easily distracted and forget the main reason for your trip to the historical society. Pick a date range and the name of the ancestor you are looking for (keeping in mind the various spellings of surnames.)

Census reports can hold valuable information. However, there may be inaccuracies. The reports were handwritten and names may be misspelled or hard to read. At times, the census reports may



*Is that Grandma’s third cousin in the photo? Find out with your genealogical chart!*

have been filled out by a neighbor and the children may have incorrect birthdates or named according to a “nickname” rather than their proper name on their birth certificate. It is best to check the census records for a number of years to ensure the validity.

Many of you may be familiar with Google Earth, the online satellite system that allows you to peer down from the sky to see what your house looks like from space. Once located, you can then see the street view photographs taken by the camera attached to a vehicle that spends the day driving up and down roads. You can use Google Earth to see what the homes and surrounding buildings looked like during different time periods. This information can be helpful in putting together the giant puzzle.

Today’s technology – Youtube, Twitter and even Facebook – may be the genealogical databases of the future. “I would kill to have one of my ancestor’s tweets from 100 years



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ago,” says Taylor. Facebook will certainly make it easier for future genealogists. It lists your birth date, where you live, and possibly information about your family.

Other sources of information include birth, death, land and tax records. Churches may contain information about individuals, including baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Check the online databases of courthouses for information on your relative, not necessarily implying your relative was in the clink, but more likely for tax records, marriage certificates and such. The International Genealogy Index [www.ancestor-search.info/src-igi.htm](http://www.ancestor-search.info/src-igi.htm) is another good source for information on birth and marriage certificates. Hillsborough County FLGenWeb Project, Inc. [www.fl-genweb.org/hillsb](http://www.fl-genweb.org/hillsb) is a user-contributed website that began in 1996 to help future genealogists with their research.

Getting involved in your local genealogical society can be a great way to learn the tips and tricks to

finding the stories behind your heritage. Florida Genealogical Society is hosting a seminar on March 16, 2013. “Seeking Irish Ancestors” will begin at 10:30 am and will be presented by Donna Moughty at the John F. Germany Public Library, 900 N. Ashley Drive, Tampa. For more information about Florida Genealogical Society, visit [www.fgstampa.org](http://www.fgstampa.org).

Imperial Polk Genealogical Society will have a seminar on April 13, 2013 at the Highland Park Church of the Nazarene, 4477 Lakeland Highlands Road, Lakeland. The seminar will feature Lisa Louise Cook, owner of Genealogy Gems, producer and host of Genealogy Gems Podcast and Family History: Genealogy Made Easy and Family Tree Magazine Podcast. Cooke has authored several articles including “Google Earth for Genealogy” and “How to Find Your Family History in Newspapers.” For more information, visit [www.ipgs.org](http://www.ipgs.org).

Take the time to pass down the stories of your life or sit and listen to the tales of other’s journeys. You may learn the story of how your grandmother was a matchmaker to your aunt and uncle that resulted in their lifetime together and 60-year marriage. During this holiday season, learn about your family traditions and incorporate them into your own.

Some of my favorite Christmas traditions include baking cookies, peppermint bark and other treats on Christmas Eve to give to friends, then later in the evening driving around town to see all the beautiful lights. In writing this article, I remembered how my grandmother would make Rice Krispy treats with cinnamon candy and hang the wrapped treats on the Christmas tree for us to enjoy. We will add this tradition to our holidays and enjoy reminiscing every year about chasing lightning bugs with our cousins at family reunions and Grandma’s Christmas tree.

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