

Keep a Family History Journal

Researching and preserving your family heritage is usually done over quite some time – years in fact. Some feel that it really never ends! The research time you spent probably had many special memories associated with it – the meeting of a third cousin, the day trip to a county library with lunch at that cozy restaurant, and so on. Have you thought about keeping a journal of your family heritage search? Not only will it record special memories, but also little facts and oddities you may uncover. Here are some tips:

- Don't confuse a journal with a research log. Logs are for the discovered facts, such as your notes from viewing a census microfilm. A journal is for the thoughts, emotions, and memories from finding the facts. Recording the location of my great-great-great grandmother's grave in a cemetery is a fact found in a library reference book. Finding her grave was a heady, emotional experience and worthy of a journal note.
- On the other hand, if a new third cousin shares a story about a great uncle you just discovered, put the experience in your journal. Not only the story, but how it made you feel to share the experience.
- Your journal can also record ideas for future research. As you sit and ponder your family, a research idea may occur. Put it in your journal and it'll be waiting on you the next time hit the trail!
- Do you ever ponder some facts, trying to figure out why certain events occurred? Why did great grandpa move the family to the other side of town? You may have a theory, if so, put it in your journal. Then you won't have to reconstruct your theory every time you look at the same facts. (See our article "The Missing Story!" for ideas on creating theories.)
- Your family heritage journal is also a record of your life, as much as it's a record of your search. You should make sure all entries have a date, where you were or went, and who you met. Not only will you be able to reconstruct a memory, but future generations can appreciate the effort you undertook to discover the family.
- Your journal is also a great source for color commentary for a heritage scrapbook album. Consider adding those family stories mentioned above to the page about a particular ancestor. Or add a journal entry

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you made when researching an ancestor. For example, if you noted in your heritage journal about getting lost finding a remote cemetery, add those comments to that ancestor's album page. This will make you a part of the album.

The search is as much fun as finding the facts. So record your heritage life in a journal!

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