

Holiday Genealogy

Holiday gatherings are just ahead. Family and friends are coming together, sharing food, fun, and stories. These fellowships are great opportunities to make your family history part of the holiday, not only for sharing, but also for learning. Here are a smattering of ideas for holiday genealogy...

- Place your heritage scrapbook on display, allowing family to page through it. Have a notepad handy to jot down any stories or tid-bits that result from the discussions.
- Create a photo-pedigree chart. Nothing stimulates conversation like pictures. “Don’t you think Jane looks like her great-grandma Mary?”
- Place family pictures, old documents and such around the house as conversation starters. But... always, always use copies of important pictures or documents for show and tell. Or at a minimum, have them in a protective enclosure, such as a frame or page protector. You don’t want any “holiday cheer” to get on the original of great grandpa’s army picture and ruin it!
- If you’re having a sit down dinner, consider creating a place card for each guest that has information or a story about one of their ancestors. If you have a picture of the ancestor, use it. This can be individualized for each person, or make a general family overview for all. Imagine the wonderful dinner conversations that will result from this!
- Set up a “holes in our history” area, perhaps on your coffee table. Use this area as a focal point to learn more about your ancestors:
 - Have a sheet of paper with an ancestor’s name at the top followed by any information you have on this person. Underneath, list what it is you want to learn. Then leave blank space underneath for people to jot down what they know.
 - A copy of a family group sheet, with the missing spots highlighted would also work.
 - If you need to identify people in a group picture, start by tracing an outline of the people on paper. Number the people on the tracing.

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Below the tracing, or on a separate sheet of paper, list the numbers to create spots for your guest to write down anyone that can identify.

- Be sure to encourage sharing of more than just facts. Just as important are the stories of the people or events. I still remember grandma telling how scared everyone was to go outside during the flu epidemic of 1918. Get people to share, then write it down.

Enjoy the holidays and may 2006 be a family-centered year for you.

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