

Why Genealogy?  
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What motivates people to research their family tree is a question that has as many answers as there are leaves on a tree in the forest. Sometimes it is as simple as curiosity; however, the answer may often be more complex. The most common answer is the occasion of a life event within your family. This could be the birth of a child, a marriage, or a death in the family. Another common motivation is the realization that you are not getting any younger and you want to leave the legacy of your heritage, in writing, to your children or grandchildren.

Rumor or family folklore can be a strong factor in starting research into your family history. Native Americans have, in some cases, traditionally passed on family history in oral histories, told around the campfire, and passed on from one generation down to the next. A comment from a grand parent that they think there are "Indians" in the early family tree (but are not sure) might spark your interest in finding out. Other rumors in your family that might ignite your curiosity range from ancestors that were; on the Mayflower, or a were part of the early colonies of Jamestown (VA), Massachusetts Bay (Boston), New Haven CT, or St. Augustine (FL).

Military History can be another factor. Did your ancestors fight in the American revolution, War of 1812, Civil War, or WWI or II? If the answer is yes this might make you eligible for membership in the Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution, or other organization depending on their specific service and which war. Lineage societies will be discussed in future articles.

Whatever might motivate you in starting a family tree, beware it usually starts as a hobby, but in the end can become an obsession. It lends itself to a hobby you can work on for an hour here and there and even put it away for weeks or years at a time around other events and obligations in your life. You can work on it with pen and paper, online, or both, and almost anywhere.

This is the first in what I hope is a long series of "How To" articles, that I hope you find useful. My current family tree has over 3,500 ancestors and descendants in it, and I am happy to share what I have learned over many years of genealogy, family history, and American History research.

Next article, coming soon: *Starting a Family Tree for Free.*