



ROUTES TO ROOTS NEWSLETTER

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Having a plan...

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Shaking Your Family Tree

Researching your family history can be a fun and valuable hobby. The hardest part of getting into genealogy is often getting started. The best way to begin is following four steps: have a plan, set a goal, have wide goals, and develop a process that works best for you.

The first step is to have a plan. By constantly reviewing your plan and information you will be able to ensure you are always headed in a direction that will help you to reach your genealogy goals.

Your goal doesn't need to be complex, just something to keep in mind to help keep you focused. Once you have your specific genealogy goal to pursue, have it in front of you as you research. This will enable you to achieve goals and reach milestones with more frequency.

Step three is to pursue your goal with a broad stroke, avoiding the temptation to focus your search on a single website. For example, if there is a specific relative you want to learn about but only have a name and place of death, your temptation might be to just search for his name. Instead, brush with a broader stroke and begin your search on someone in the family you know more about, a son perhaps. You will be surprised at how often you will stumble upon clues to your original focus by using this method.

Lastly, be prepared to discover your own methodology. Document the strategies that worked for you so that you can use them for other genealogy searches. For instance, many people search all of their family names through a variety of search engines. You can use this method and add other keywords or search terms that might pull genealogy related websites to the top of your results. Try to remember the methods that worked best for you and add them to your process so that you become more efficient as you pursue your genealogy.

Shaking your family tree can be a lot of fun so develop your plan, set your goal, research with broad strokes and continually refine your process. ✍

Old Family Traditions & The New Generation

Carried forward through the years by each new generation, old family traditions are a powerful means of strengthening the bonds that hold families together. Old family traditions often serve to connect the older generation with the new generation, encouraging interaction through shared activities, and can also offer a way for families separated by distance to feel close.

Many of the most meaningful old family traditions revolve around food, with families gathering to eat and celebrate together. Often the foods served at the meal are determined by tradition, with recipes passed down from generation to generation or specific family members preparing their specialties year after year.

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That food should serve as a centerpiece for so many of the old family traditions that are passed to the new generation comes as no surprise. Food is essential to survival, and being grateful for the success of its production, whether through agriculture or the hunt, is at the base of not only many old family traditions, but also many of the world's ancient religions.

Celebrating the abundance of the harvest is done throughout the world, with each culture giving rise to a particular set of old family traditions. However, as different as these cultures may be, the foundation of these celebrations is the gathering together of families to feast, to share food, to break bread.

There are many old family traditions designed specifically to celebrate the new generation. Some are as lighthearted and fun as the yearly birthday gathering for cake, ice cream and gifts. Others are built upon meaningful, often symbolic, rituals marking the milestones along the path to maturity. In each, it is the older generation celebrating the progress of the new generation, as one day that generation will do for its own children.

Even when families cannot gather together, which is increasingly common today as families find their members scattered throughout the nation and even the world, old family traditions can help to maintain family ties. Knowing that thousands of miles away, other family members are engaged in the same activities can help keep that feeling of closeness among family members.

Often the new generation uses old family traditions to honor those who have passed before them. Many children learn the history of their families in this way, listening as family members share memories of those who are no longer with them and of their own childhood remembrances. Sometimes it is the old family traditions that hold a family together, the adult siblings continuing to gather with their children after their parents have died.

Participating in the old family traditions builds memories that will last a lifetime, and serves to build relationships, not only between the old and new generations, but also amongst those that will be continuing the families as the elder members pass away. Teaching the new generation to honor old family traditions can help to preserve the family through the years, even through the times when its members cannot gather together, fostering a sense of belonging that will be a source of joy for years to come.

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