

feature



TAKE A GENEALOGICAL TRIP

Travel through time and discover fascinating people—your family members!

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Exploring your family genealogy can be an exciting, enriching, and worthwhile activity. Your family will uncover epic stories about triumphs and explorations while acting as private investigators and piecing together clues about your ancestors. Along the way, you'll forge meaningful connections with the spirits and lives of the people who led your family here—not only here in the United States, but here in Michigan and in the Great Lakes Bay Region. And, you may very well build and strengthen bonds with relatives living right around you.

Read on to learn more about genealogy and how to make it a memorable experience for the whole family.



WHAT IS GENEALOGY?

In the most basic of definitions, genealogy is the study of family history.

"Some people think of [studying] genealogy as putting together a puzzle," says Mary McManman, head of references at Alice & Jack Wirt Public Library in Bay City. "But the puzzle is about them, so it's much more personal. It's fun!"

Each of your children has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents, and beyond. Your family is, indeed, part of a very large puzzle. Connecting the pieces, while nourishing a larger sense of family pride, is where the real fun of genealogy begins.

GETTING STARTED

Tracing your family surname is a relatively quick yet rewarding discovery, and it could make a great genealogical starting point. From where did your family name originate? What does it mean?

If you want to take your research one step further, investigate whether your family has a family crest. A family crest is defined as the image that appears on the helmet of a family's coat of arms and is a symbol that

dates back to the medieval time period. Not all families have a family crest. Does yours?

When beginning your genealogical search, remain open to alternative spellings of your last name. McManman points toward multiple reasons for changes in the spelling of last names, including personal choice by an ancestor or even personal error upon entering names from old papers into modern databases.

FAMILY-FUN IDEAS:

1. When you discover what country your ancestors came from, cook a traditional meal from that country together.
2. Learn words such as mom, dad, brother, sister, or family in your ancestral language.
3. If your family does have a family crest, have your children draw their own versions of the crest and display them proudly.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Once your family has discovered its ancestral beginnings, how do you trace your ancestors to your family today?



Stacy McNally, local history and genealogy librarian at Hoyt Public Library in Saginaw, says the most common method of genealogical research is to actually begin with your immediate family, and carefully work your way backward by generation.

The Great Lakes Bay Region libraries that have genealogy divisions—Hoyt Public Library in Saginaw, Alice & Jack Wirt Public Library in Bay City, and Grace A. Dow Memorial Library in Midland—have a plethora of resources available for your family to use. There are local newspapers in print and on microfilm with birth notices and obituaries dated in the 1800s, archives, the Internet, and, depending on the library, free usage of www.ancestry.com. McManman points toward census and vital records as incredibly useful options for finding information.

Many websites also provide a wealth of genealogical information. For example, www.familysearch.org is a free and reputable website that offers genealogical how-to videos and guides.

FAMILY-FUN IDEA:

Create a family tree, and tailor it to the interests of your children. Younger children can paint or draw, while older children can write in names.

WHY? Family tree projects are fun for children and helpful for adults to keep newly-found information documented and organized.

GET EVEN MORE CREATIVE. Add photos, newspaper clippings, or artifacts to your tree to make it more personal.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF GENEALOGY

DO:

- Talk to your living relatives. You never know what fascinating stories they have to tell to a pair of listening ears.
- Consider signing your family up for a free class for beginners in genealogy. Check with your local library for dates and times.
- Incorporate your children into your search, and help keep them curious and excited with different activities.
- Make at least one visit to Hoyt Public Library in Saginaw. It's the third largest genealogical library in Michigan!

DON'T:

- Get too hung up on only one spelling of your last name. Variations are common.
- Expect to find everything out in one weekend. Genealogy takes time.

LIVING GENEALOGICAL GEMS

While the library and Internet will certainly assist in your search, genealogists will tell you that your family's most valuable resources are actually the living relatives who surround you. By talking with grandparents, great-grandparents, or distant cousins, your family is sure to find photos you haven't seen before, hear stories you've never heard, and make true and lasting connections.

"Talk to your living relatives," says McNally. "Ask them everything. What do they remember? They are your best resource."

Revel in the crown jewel of genealogy—the connections made and the stories learned. Write down the stories your family discovers, and share them.

FAMILY-FUN IDEA:

TRY THIS. Create time for your children to "interview" grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Ask what they were like as kids, what games they played, and what they know about your family history.

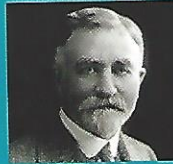
THEN WHAT? Record the interviews. These will undoubtedly become precious keepsakes.

A WORTHWHILE ACTIVITY

There's no telling what your family will discover on your genealogical journey. No two family stories are the same. But you'll beam with pride when you hear your children tell exciting stories about distant relatives, feel pure joy watching them learn from their elders, and know without a doubt that discovering your genealogy together was worthwhile.

WHO'S WHO IN LOCAL HISTORY

These well-known names all played a part in our region's story



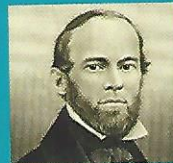
HERBERT HENRY DOW
(1866 – 1930), FOUNDER OF
DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY
IN MIDLAND

In 1890, Herbert Henry Dow founded the Midland Chemical Company, but was fired. Financial backers didn't approve of his continued research. He formed the Dow Chemical Company in 1897, and within three years he purchased the company that fired him.



FRANK N. ANDERSEN
(1889 – 1997), SAGINAW
BUSINESSMAN AND
PHILANTHROPIST

Frank N. Andersen, only 12 years old when his widowed mother's death forced him to drop out of school and support himself, owned Andersen Sand & Gravel. He contributed \$15,000 worth of cement during the WWII era to build Saginaw's original Andersen Pool.



JESSIE HOYT (1815-1882),
BENEFACTOR
OF SAGINAW'S HOYT
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Jessie Hoyt, of New York, was never a permanent resident of Saginaw. Yet, along with his father and four brothers, Hoyt largely promoted the creation and growth of Saginaw's economy. Hoyt bequeathed Saginaw \$100,000 in his will for the establishment of today's Hoyt Public Library. *Photo of Jessie Hoyt, courtesy of Saginaw People Collection, Local History and Genealogy, Public Libraries of Saginaw.*



JOSEPH (1809 – 1883)
AND MADOR TROMBLY
(1813 - 1902), BAY
CITY'S FIRST SETTLERS

Between 1837 and 1839, brothers Joseph and Mador Trombly built a two-and-a-half story structure at what is now the corner of Water and 24th streets in Bay City. The structure is thought to be the first frame house erected in Bay County. The historical home has been relocated to Veterans Memorial Park, and is available for touring.