

[Lone Star Indie Review: CHILD OF MANY](#)

An insightful journey through decades of intermingled bloodlines

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[*Child of Many*](#)

Suzanne Gene Courtney

Child of Many is a tender and earnestly written look into the history of the author's bloodlines dating from the Mayflower, up through the birth of a nation, through the tragedy of the Civil War, and into current day. The author's blood relationship to a president, an American icon, as well as other significant Americans give this book a sense of awe and patriotism uncommon in similar testimonies.

Courtney presents the distinguished history of her ancestry in a very logical order, with photos of significant family members, as well as copies of historical newspaper articles. Considering the wealth of information included in work such as this, the author's approach was very straightforward. Lineages were grouped based on both ancestry and time.

More than a chronology of events, marriages, births, and deaths, Courtney adds additional prose to bring these events and people to life. For example, one very interesting relationship was that of Frederick Douglass, the African American social reformer, orator, writer, and statesman. After his first wife died, Douglass married Helen Pitts, a blood relation to the author. Courtney also included her favorite Douglass quotes, such as, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Highlights of the 19th century include an affectionate discussion of the author's relationship to Elizabeth Clift Bacon, "Libbie," as she was called. In February 1864, Libbie married the youngest general in the Union Army: George Armstrong Custer. In describing how much Custer adored Libbie, the author included an anecdote of how Custer would order his cavalry band to play for her as she sipped tea atop Mount Bonnell, in Austin.

The artifacts presented in the book also include a number of handwritten letters between spouses, as well as poetry, including a beautiful poem written by the author. Frequently, when her ancestors are written about in other works, the author will note the work and usually include a relevant passage. For example, an excerpt from *The Underground Railroad* by Mary Ellen Snodgrass is included and discusses how Frederick Douglass and his wife, Helen Pitts, maintained an underground railroad station to help slaves escape to freedom in the North.

There are easily hundreds of names throughout the text, but primarily in the first half of the book. A visual family tree (or trees) would have been very helpful in keeping all the lineages in focus.

At the conclusion of the text, Courtney offers some thoughtful questions to ponder. For example: “Can we have lived in different lifetimes as members of our soul family? Can we have inherited not only our ancestors’ DNA but their thoughts, feelings, and physical conditions?”

Overall, *Child of Many* is an insightful journey through decades of intermingled bloodlines, demonstrating how people we know may be related to people that we’ve read about in history books. This book can nudge a reader to question one’s own lineage and makes the reader wonder whether any surprises await discovery.