

LESSON: DISCOVER YOUR ANCESTORS, BUILD YOUR OWN TREE BY LINDA LEE HANDY

1.WHY DO AMERICANS SEARCH FOR FAMILY ROOTS: Curiosity about their heritage, strengthening family connections (from one generation to another), and a desire for self-discovery. Understanding the journeys, struggles, and triumphs of ancestors can help a person feel more connected to their own life story. Research has shown that children who know more about their family history tend to have higher self-esteem and resilience. Learning how ancestors navigated hardships like war, migration, or poverty can provide strength and perspective to overcome modern challenges. Ancestral stories can show a pattern of perseverance that helps a person find hope, courage, healing, and compassion. Uncovering the traumas, faults, or hardships that afflicted previous generations can lead to a deeper understanding of living relatives, even encourage forgiveness or healing.

2. THERE ARE MANY SITES TO HELP YOU DISCOVER LIKE ANCESTRY.COM AND DNA KITS. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE: [WWW.FAMILYSEARCH.ORG](http://www.familysearch.org) On these pages, you are offered free help (listing local Family Search Help Centers or a free consult online with researcher.) On the main page, you can start your personal search by filling in identifying information about your ancestor and any information that you have (place of birth, date born, died.) Website states, ***“Build the branches of your own family tree: The automated tree builder will guide you along. As you add information, we'll search for ancestor connections.”*** You will be assigned an ID number (and every ancestor will also have an ID.) Website states, ***“Search a huge archive of historical documents: We’ve gathered a variety of important documents that recorded important life events. Records can help to tell the story of your family.”*** What you find may absolutely surprise you! You may see postings and data provided by cousins and relatives (many offer contact info), with family stories, family histories, important records, and photos. Website states, ***“Trace Their Lives & Legacies: Trace their lives and legacies with our advanced obituary search tool. Our platform provides up-to-date and detailed information, allowing you to delve into the stories of your relatives and uncover the rich tapestry of their lives. Whether piecing together your family tree or learning about your ancestors' achievements and experiences, our data ensures you can confidently explore their legacies.”***

3. YOU WILL BE ASSIGNED AN ID (AS ARE ALL LISTED PERSONS, ANCESTORS). You can use your ID to trace your family tree and see to whom you are related (even pioneers and famous people.) Website states, ***“Family History Fun: Choose from a list of activities that help put fun into family search.”*** Several years ago, I was a youth leader in my church (for the delightful ages: girls 8-11) with a challenge **to plan service & activities that focus on the four areas of growth: spiritual, social, physical, & intellectual.** It was November. I felt inspired to have each girl (with parents and other volunteer help) search their ancestry (on FamilySearch) and share. Some were just getting started to build their family tree, and delighted in what they were finding and enjoyed sharing. Some were like my granddaughter had relatives who had built a long family tree, and even found a few amazing pilgrim ancestors!

4. FAMILY DISCUSSION: How can knowing your ancestors help your family? When you find very little information, how can this encourage you to write your own history for future generations?

5. RESOURCES: <https://www.ancestry.com/>; <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/>