



MIDWEST  
GENEALOGY  
CENTER

# Family Time Travelers

Introducing Genealogy to Kids

## About the Midwest Genealogy Center

Located at 3440 S. Lee's Summit Rd. in Independence, Missouri, the Midwest Genealogy Center is the largest free-standing, public family history library in the United States. MGC is part of the Mid-Continent Public Library system which serves Jackson, Clay, and Platte counties. We provide free access to almost three-quarters of a million on-site materials along with online databases, research assistance, and other unique services.

Visit us online at: [www.midwestgenealogycenter.org](http://www.midwestgenealogycenter.org)

## This presentation will explore the following topics:

- Getting Kids Started with Genealogy
- Programs, Resources, Services at MGC
- Outreach and Community Partnerships
- Additional Family History Resources for Kids

## Time Traveling with Genealogy

- Family history research creates a personal, unique doorway to the past for each of us.
- As researchers, you can “meet” your ancestors by reconstructing their lives with research and storytelling – bringing them to life.
- Exploring family photographs, letters, and memorabilia makes our ancestors real in the present rather than names and dates on a page.

## Benefits of Family History for Children

- Develops a strong “family narrative” about where they came from
  - Family history is storytelling.
  - Sharing that story with your children creates and continues family traditions.
- Children have an “intergenerational self” when they feel connected to past generations.
  - When children understand the struggles and success of their family story, this helps build identity and resilience to overcome their own challenges.
  - Understanding their own family intersects with history and past events creates can be affirming, creating feelings of representation, connection, and belonging.
- Talking about genealogy and researching together can strengthen family relationships.

## How to Get Kids Started

- Start young, but don't overwhelm them with details.
- Help them create their own family tree.
- Make it a bonding activity as a family and learn together.
  - Parents can model the behavior they want to reinforce with their kids – if you demonstrate your interest in researching and exploring your family history, they are more likely to want to do it with you.
- Share family photos and keepsakes with kids so they can feel a connection to and ownership of them.

## Age-Appropriate Activities to Get Kids Involved:

- Tell family stories and interview relatives.

- Sharing stories is the best way to start (check out MGC's Tell Me a Story program)
- Fill out family tree coloring sheets.
- Attend family reunions, ethnic and living history festivals in your community.
- Do hands-on, old-fashioned handicrafts or games to let kids experience the things their ancestors would have done at their age.
- Make new or old family recipes together.
  - If you don't have any of your ancestor's recipes, no problem! Start your own family recipes they can pass down to their children.
- Bury a family time capsule.

### **Continuing as They Grow Up:**

- Identify specific areas of interest, opportunities for empowerment.
  - Go on family history vacations visiting the places their ancestors lived or locations of big events.
  - Explore museums and battlefields; take tours in relevant places (virtually or in-person)
    - Come visit MGC's new Gallery Wall exhibit space: [www.mymcpl.org/services/gallery-wall-midwest-genealogy-center](http://www.mymcpl.org/services/gallery-wall-midwest-genealogy-center)
  - Use more complex family forms like pedigree charts and research checklists.
  - Wander around cemeteries and discover the stories there.
  - Attend programs at the library.
  - Get involved in family archiving and digitization projects.

### **Our Collection and Activities at MGC**

- Located on the first floor, we have a growing children's collection featuring fiction and non-fiction family history books.
  - Customers can check these items out and place holds to have them sent to other MCPL branches for pick up.
- Fun activities available for visitors any day, any time:
  - Coloring sheets and kid-friendly family trees forms
  - Online resources for kids on MGC's website including activity sheets and games

### **Youth Genealogy Programs at the Library**

- All programs and events are available to view on the MGC website at: <https://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/events>
- Customers can register online to attend these programs. MCPL library cards are not required to register.

### **Exploring Family Trees: Storytime at MGC**

- 4th Monday at 2:00pm, all ages allowed
- Family history themed stories
- Kids will sing songs and join in movement activities

### **Genealogy Classes**

- Offered once every three months for various age ranges
- Beginner-friendly and interactive
  - Discovering Your Family's Story class (Ages 6+)
  - Genes for Teens class (Ages 12+)

### **Kids Create Art Programs**

- Occurs one Saturday a month
- Themed arts and crafts activities, the library provides the supplies

- Offered at various MCPL branches

### **Family Fun Day at MGC**

- Annual summer event at MGC featuring live performances and family friendly games and activities
- 2023: Mr. Stinky Feet, Hannah the Hippo, family history themed escape room and scavenger hunt, food truck
- 2024: Stone Lion Puppet Theatre, historical town-themed interactive craft and activity booths, firefighter visit

### **Additional Programs and Resources**

- Group building tours
- School and homeschool visits
- Genealogy & archival outreach programs (virtual and in-person)

### **Outreach and Community Partnerships**

#### **Outreach**

- MGC can bring our services and resources to you:
  - Afterschool programs/open houses
  - Youth organizations
  - Day care facilities
  - Homeschool groups
- Contact the MGC Programming Librarian for more information.

#### **Scouts and Brownies Resources**

- Multiple genealogy merit badge counselors on staff at MGC and we host programs to assist with the completion of badge requirements.
- Partner with Eagle Scout projects
- Facilitate programs to complete the Brownies “My Family Story” badge

#### **Resources for Educators**

- MGC works with teachers, schools, and organizations to develop educational materials and programming
- *Veteran Voices of the Heartland* - grades 7-12 curriculum project in partnership with University of Central Missouri, funded by a Veterans Affairs grant
  - MGC assisted in the creation of a teacher’s handbook and developed information and resources to integrate into the classroom
  - For more information about this project, visit: <https://www.ucmo.edu/news/university-news/2023-08-14-federal-va-grant-supports-voices-of-the-heartland-project.php>
- Summer school programs
- Homeschool groups

#### **MGC Archives**

- The MGC Archivist does outreach and school visits.
- Hands-on archival kits for students
- Rare books and archival materials are available to the public
  - Use the MGC Genealogy Gallery to explore our digitized archival collections: <https://content.mymcpl.org>
- Archiving a Life Story – a hybrid (in-person and virtual) class covering how to preserve your family items for people of all experience levels.

### **Tell Me A Story Oral History Program**

- Preserve your family stories together – use this tool to record family interviews.
- Tell Me a Story kits “Kids Edition”
  - A kid-friendly version of our TMAS kits that comes with a voice recorder and question prompts.
  - Customers receive a free copy of their recording and can opt into providing a copy to our digital archive.
- Learn more about the Tell Me a Story Oral History Program here:

### **The Memory Lab at MCPL**

- The Lab is a free, DIY space for digitizing materials such as home movies, audio tapes, recipe books, and family photographs.
- Customers can book three-hour appointments online via the MGC website – walk-ins are allowed, but without a reservation the Lab’s availability cannot be guaranteed.
- MCPL library cards are not required to use the Lab.
- Currently supported formats:
  - VHS/S-VHS tapes
  - Audio cassette tapes
  - Photographs (scanner fits up to 11x17”)
  - 8mm and Super 8 film (reels only, no camcorder tapes)
  - 35mm slides
  - Negatives
  - Documents
- To learn more about the Memory Lab and the digitization of obsolete media, visit:  
[www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/resources/memory-lab](http://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/resources/memory-lab)

### **Additional Family History Resources for Children**

- Family Tree Magazine: <https://familytreemagazine.com/kids-genealogy>
- PBS’s Finding Your Roots – The Seedlings classroom: <https://fyrclassroom.org/index.html>
- Midwest Genealogy Center: [www.midwestgenealogycenter.org](http://www.midwestgenealogycenter.org)

### **Research Assistance at MGC**

Do you have a research question? Need a book look-up to save you a drive? Would you like to schedule a consult appointment with MGC staff? Do you need help accessing our resources or services?

Call (816) 252-7228 or email us at [mgc@mymcpl.org](mailto:mgc@mymcpl.org)

Follow us on Facebook: @MCPLMidwestGenealogyCenter