

Family Memories
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October is Family History Month! Started twenty years ago by an act of Congress, it is a time to explore our roots, preserve memories, and connect to our past. Making connections to those who have gone before can strengthen us in times of difficulty. True stories have a way of inspiring us, and stories that connect to our own even more so. In 2010, psychologists from Emory University conducted an interesting study involving 14 - 16 year olds. Controlling for a variety of factors, they found a strong contributing factor to these teens' ability to cope with emotional distress, failure, and hardship was knowing family stories. Teens that had a strong sense of who they were showed much greater resilience despite differences in socio-economic and family stability. The stories of their family and ancestors provided an emotional anchor that grounded the way they responded to negative situations. There is a power, you could say, in knowing where we come from and how we got here.

When I was young, I visited my grandparents each summer in Rockville, Utah – a small town just outside of Zion National Park. It was fun to explore the canyon lands, play at the swimming hole, and help my grandparents in their garden and small orchard. My cousins, siblings, and I had many fun adventures. Those are personal stories for me, but they are a connection for my own children. Seeing their own enthusiasm for exploring and adventure both inherited and learned from such stories, I can't help wondering sometimes if I haven't opened Pandora's Box!

My own sense of curiosity was sparked in part by an early love of reading, which in turn was fostered by the example of my grandfather. To the adults of my youth, it was no secret, but its placement in my grandparent's home made it seem mysterious and exciting – my grandfather's private library. Hidden away back in a basement hallway, the entrance to that part of the house was separate from the rest and partly masked by a wall covered with honeysuckle vines and overshadowed by an old pecan tree. It was like a dragon's hidden treasure in its cave. Unlike a dragon's horde of wealth, however, my grandfather allowed each of us grandchildren the opportunity to keep one book from his library each summer that we visited. Some of those books I selected in my youth impacted things I studied in college years later. Knowledge is a gift that never gets old.

As you think about your own treasured memories or wonder what memories are waiting to be discovered, the library is a great resource for a variety of research and preservation activities. We have excellent books in our collection that cover how to search for family records online or how to complete and understand a DNA test kit. We have local records in our archives available for searching that go back in some cases to the 1860s. We have Ancestry.com's Library Edition available for free at the library and for a limited time accessible from home as well. Don't forget about our Memory Lab! Using our Memory Lab, you can digitize old photos, slides, audio cassettes, phonographs, home videos, and more to make them easier to store, preserve, and share. On Tuesday, October 19, at 6:30 PM, we will also be having a basic family

history research and family tree program in our meeting room. We hope you'll take advantage of the many resources and services the library has to offer in helping you connect to your family roots. If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment, you can call the library at 507-359-8331.