

IT'S ALL BEEN

# Done



BY LORETTA EVANS

*Do you think your family history has all been done? Think again.*

Church members who have several generations of Latter-day Saint ancestors may feel there is nothing they can do when it comes to family history. When you know your relatives have worked on genealogy, it's tempting to assume that all of it has been done.

If your family lines have been researched extensively, there are still many meaningful ways you can contribute to family history. Following are some questions to get you started.

#### **Have you made records of your own life?**

If you don't write your own life story, who will? Your life has been blessed by reading stories of your ancestors. Keeping a journal and writing your own personal history will bless the lives of your children and grandchildren for generations.

My mother, who is 92 years old, enjoys rereading her own autobiography. It helps her remember good times from the past. She shares these stories with other people who live in her nursing home.

#### **Do you have accurate records of your immediate family?**

Parents should regularly document the life events of their children and grandchildren. It is surprising how

quickly records become outdated, and it is much easier to record events as they happen rather than trying to reconstruct information later. If you record information about your immediate family using Personal Ancestral File (PAF) software, you will easily be able to share your data with other family members.

Recent disasters, such as floods, fires, and earthquakes, have underscored the importance of making duplicate copies of important papers and electronic files. Make duplicate copies of your family records, and keep them in a separate location to ensure they are preserved.

**Do you have copies of your ancestors' records?**

If your relatives have worked on family history, do you have copies of their records? If they are not already computerized, one of the best ways for you to contribute is to enter family information onto a PAF database. A family history consultant in your ward can help you get started with this.

After you have entered information about your living family members, you can begin downloading data on deceased ancestors from the FamilySearch™ Web site (<http://www.familysearch.org>). It is useful to begin with just a few generations. When you are familiar with those families, you can download additional generations from FamilySearch.

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If you have computer files that were given to you by a relative, you should periodically check to see if they are still readable. Electronic files on floppy disks and even CDs and DVDs are not permanent. They can be damaged by changes in heat and humidity. Magnetic fields can erase or disturb data that were stored on floppy disks.

In addition, it is important to update information as computer technology changes. Today, it is difficult to find a computer that can read 5 1/4-inch floppy disks. The 3 1/2-inch disks will soon be obsolete.

**Have you checked your genealogy for completeness and accuracy?**

Once you have a Personal Ancestral File database, check each name to make sure that all needed temple ordinances have been completed. Your family history consultant can help you do this using FamilySearch. You can also check your records for accuracy, one family at a time. FamilySearch is only as accurate as the information submitted, and some files have obvious, correctable errors.

- Look for any information that appears inaccurate. Check with relatives and compare your information with information from public documents. Record sources as you collect information; this will make it easier to evaluate conflicting data.



- Use PAF to create a “possible problems” list to quickly analyze your data and point out possible mistakes. Not every event in such a list is incorrect. The computer looks for possible errors, like a marriage for someone younger than 16 or older than 60. Although such marriages are uncommon, they may be accurate for your ancestor.

- If you find families with only one child, consider doing some research to look for additional children. Sometimes people stop doing genealogical research when they find their ancestor’s parents. They forget to look for brothers and sisters.

#### **Have you found your ancestors in original documents?**

Your relatives may have done all the research they could, but newly available sources on the Internet, on microfilm, or in books might enable you to learn more. Even when you know that their temple work has been completed, there is a thrill in seeing your ancestor’s name in an original document.

I found a microfilm of my grandparents’ marriage record. W. Ray Luce and Rachel Olsen were married on April 8, 1907. When Rachel signed the marriage record, she signed “Mrs. Ray Luce.” It touched my heart. Here was the bride, trying out her new name for the first time. I

could relate to her as a real person, not just as a name on a family group sheet.

#### **Do you have a family organization?**

A family organization is a good way to coordinate family history research.

These groups may hold reunions, publish newsletters, host Internet sites, and sponsor research. Your family organization can coordinate submissions to Pedigree Resource File to share family information.

Some descendants of early LDS ancestors have excellent family organizations, while others do not. If no organization exists, you might want to contact other relatives about creating one. If you have one, pay your dues and offer to help.

#### **Have you considered descendency research?**

Your ancestors may have joined the Church, but many of their family members probably did not. Those who research only their direct-line ancestors may have overlooked an important way to find other relatives who need temple ordinances. When you find your ancestors who first joined the Church, look for their children, siblings, aunts, and uncles who did not.

Cousins and other more distant relatives may also need their temple work completed. In general, you may submit names of deceased individuals related to you who were born more than 95 years ago. You may also submit the names of immediate family members who have been deceased for at least one year. Your family history consultant can help you learn which names to submit.

#### **What do you know about your ancestors’ lives?**

Read published biographies of your ancestors if any are available. In addition, family members may have collected

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unpublished stories. You can add to these by recording and sharing stories that you remember about your parents and grandparents.

As you learn more about your ancestors, they will become more than names on a family group sheet. They will become people you love whose experiences can influence your life and the lives of your descendants. Your hearts will be turned to them even more.

### Do you have family photographs or documents?

If you own copies of family photographs or documents, you can share them with extended family members. One good way is to scan the pictures into a computer file, add a caption to identify everyone in the photograph, and create a CD to share with your relatives. If you are generous with the information you have, other cousins might give you copies of pictures and documents they own. Photographs can be linked to family names in PAF.

### Do you own family heirlooms?

Heirlooms should be protected from damage by heat, light, humidity fluctuations, or natural disasters. If they are stored away for protection, many descendants won't even know they exist. Take photographs of any family heirlooms you own or have access to and attach a brief history of the owner and why the object is meaningful. Such a file is useful for insurance purposes, but more

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

- A family history consultant in your ward can guide you as needed.
- The FamilySearch Web site (<http://www.familysearch.org>) is the way to access the family history information stored by the Church. You can also download the Personal Ancestral File software there.
- Your local family history center offers many helpful resources. FamilySearch.org can help you locate a family history center near your home.
- Consider joining a genealogical society near your home. Many publish newsletters with helpful information. They may offer classes or conferences where you can learn more about researching your ancestors.

important, your family members will learn the stories behind these items.

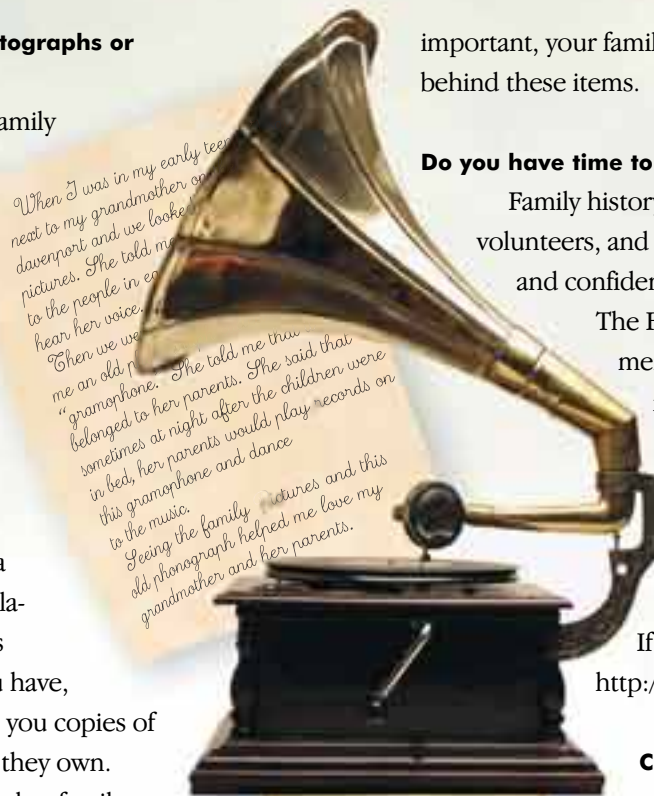
### Do you have time to serve others in family history?

Family history centers throughout the world need volunteers, and this is a good way to gain experience and confidence in doing family history work.

The Family and Church History Department is in the process of digitizing its microfilmed genealogical records so they can be freely posted on the Internet. Volunteers are needed to help create indexes for these records. You can do this at home if you have an Internet connection. If you would like to help, register at <http://www.familysearchindexing.org/>.

### Creating an eternal bond

Family history is much more than filling out family group sheets and building computer files; it is about turning our hearts to our fathers. As you find your ancestors' names in original records, read about their lives, or hold the items they once owned, you will create eternal bonds with them. As Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "You are not just gathering names. Those you never met in life will become friends you love. Your heart will be bound to theirs forever" ("Hearts Bound Together," *Ensign*, May 2005, 79). ■



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