



Branching Out on

BY GEORGE D. DURRANT

Feel like you are at a dead end searching your family tree? Then give descendanty research a try.

I remember, as a grandfather, having a picture taken of our family. Like other grandparents, I did not want a single descendant left out. What a task it was to arrange everyone's schedule so we could all be in the same place at the same time. But it was worth it.

I think that is how most families feel. Grandparents love their children and grandchildren. They want to spend eternity with them. So why wouldn't our ancestors feel

the same way about their posterity?
I think they would.

As Latter-day Saints, we have the priesthood power to provide temple ordinances that can seal families together forever. So just as my grandparents didn't want to leave even one of their children or grandchildren out of the family portrait, they wouldn't want to leave even one of

Your Family Tree



them out of their eternal family.

Yet as we reach back through time on our pedigree, we sometimes provide the saving ordinances for only one child of each couple on our pedigree chart—the child who is our direct ancestor. We seal that child to his or her parents, but we forget about the rest of the children in that family. We leave our ancestral families like an incomplete family portrait with many empty spaces.

Tracking Descendants

Providing temple ordinances for relatives other than our direct ancestors is not a new direction. This article is simply a reminder that in addition to providing ordinances for our direct ancestors, we can also provide ordinances for the

descendants of our direct ancestors. We should, however, be sensitive to the feelings of others and obtain permission from the closest living relative when submitting the names of deceased persons who were born within the last 95 years.

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote on July 14, 1994: “Members of the Church as individuals and families are responsible to identify their own direct-line ancestral families and see that temple ordinances are performed for them. They may

PICKING THE LOW-HANGING FRUIT

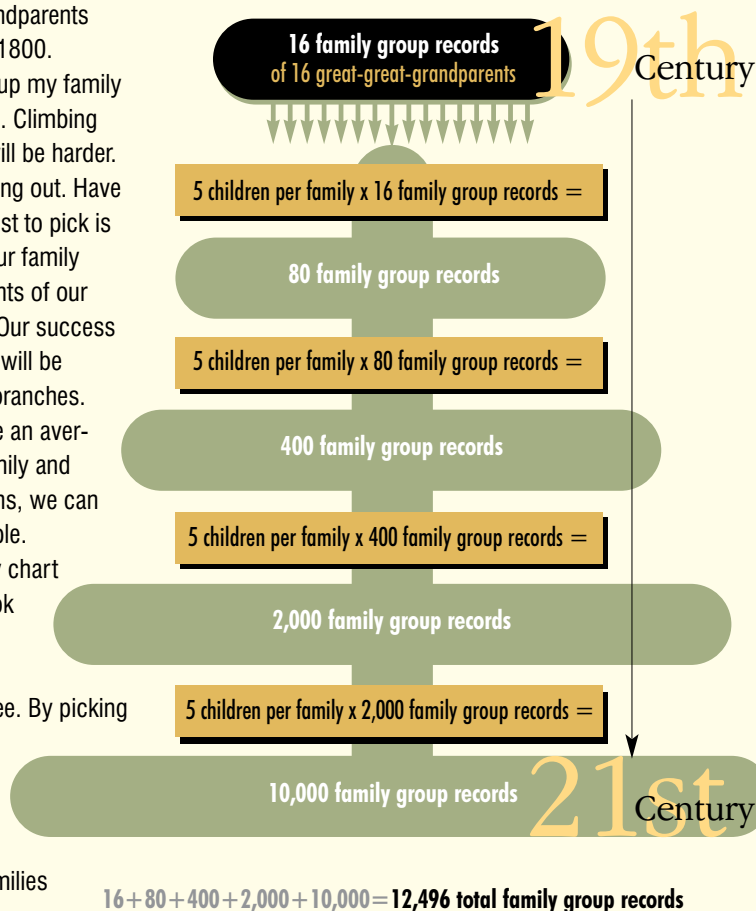
BY SAM LOWER

My great-great-grandparents were born about 1800. Climbing that far up my family tree was fairly easy for me. Climbing higher up the family tree will be harder. So I thought about branching out. Have you? The fruit that is easiest to pick is in the lower branches of our family tree, among the descendants of our great-great grandparents. Our success rate in the lower branches will be greater than in the higher branches.

For example, if we have an average of five children per family and come down five generations, we can expect to find 12,496 people.

Printing a descendency chart will show you where to look for family members on the lower, more accessible branches of your family tree. By picking the low-hanging fruit, we will be able to identify more family members, provide temple ordinances for them, and seal their families together for eternity.

Sample Descendency of Our 16 Great-Great-Grandparents



also do family history research and temple work for their deceased relatives who are collaterally related (not their direct lines).”¹¹

A Few Simple Steps

So how do you get started if you want to provide ordinances for an entire ancestral family?

1. Choose a name from your pedigree chart. You may want to begin by choosing someone from within the first five generations. (See “Picking the Low-Hanging Fruit,” by Sam Lower, above.) For example: John Hall.

2. Create a family group record for that ancestor. For example: John Hall with his wife, Jane, and their children, Elizabeth, William, and Sarah.

3. Then create a family group record for each child of that ancestor. For example: Elizabeth, with her husband and their children; William, with his wife and their children; and Sarah, with her husband and their children.

4. Now you have a descendency that includes a set of grandparents (John and Jane Hall) with their children (Elizabeth, William, and Sarah) and grandchildren (the children of Elizabeth, William, and Sarah).

5. As you search the records where your ancestor lived, gather any information you find on the entire ancestral family. With the technology available today, you will be able to search more effectively than ever before.

6. Broaden your search to other areas where family members lived, if needed.

7. Provide temple ordinances for individuals as they are uniquely identified.

8. You can repeat this pattern by choosing another name on your pedigree chart.

Blessings and Clues

So why would anyone want to do family history for an ancestral family?

1. Some people feel that their family history has all been done. By choosing an ancestor on our pedigree chart and identifying the ancestor’s children and grandchildren, we will have the opportunity to experience the joy of doing family history work and providing temple ordinances for more of our own family members.

2. Records become scarcer as we research ancestors who lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When we do research in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we have more records available and, as a result, have more opportunity for success.

3. Since the families of the children and grandchildren often lived in the same area as grandparents, we can find the needed information with little extra work. This is an efficient use of research time.

4. Clues to ancestors are found in the records of their descendants. When you gather records of the descendants of an ancestor, you will have a better chance of finding clues of that ancestor than if you just search the records of one child or grandchild.

5. Meeting living cousins can be a blessing. All of you will learn more family stories and discover other family photos. You may also find out more about your common ancestors.

Rejoicing in Posterity

Attending the temple and doing vicarious work for a person who never had these temple ordinances in life is spiritually satisfying, but when we do this work for our own family members, the satisfaction is magnified. By seeking the descendants of a direct line ancestor, all of whom have a kinship relationship to us, our time spent in doing their temple work will have deeper meaning in our lives.

Perhaps you have already been



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Cut several long strips of paper, and write on each strip the name of a person from your immediate or extended family. Join the strips as if they were links in a chain. Read the section “Rejoicing in Posterity.” Explain that if one link is missing, the chain is incomplete. Testify of the blessings that come from uniting families through priesthood covenants.

2. See who in the family can name the most relatives. Use pictures if possible. Review the “Simple Steps” on getting started in family history. Assign family members one ancestor each for whom they can create a family group record. Complete the temple work, if needed.

3. Create a game by hanging fruit at different heights, including some that are too high to reach. Have family members try to pick the fruit. At what height is the fruit easiest to pick? Read “Picking the Low-Hanging Fruit,” and discuss how family history research can produce great success when we identify family members who lived within the last 150 years.

approaching your family history in this broader way. If so, you already know the joy of seeing things through the eyes of your ancestors. You recognize that they would want to have their children and grandchildren with them eternally, just as we do. You may have even broadened your research to include great-grandchildren and beyond. The more of the members of an ancestral family for whom you are able to do temple work, the greater the joy and rejoicing your ancestors will be able to have in their posterity. ■

NOTE

1. Letter to General Authorities; Regional Representatives [now Area Authorities]; Temple Presidents; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents.