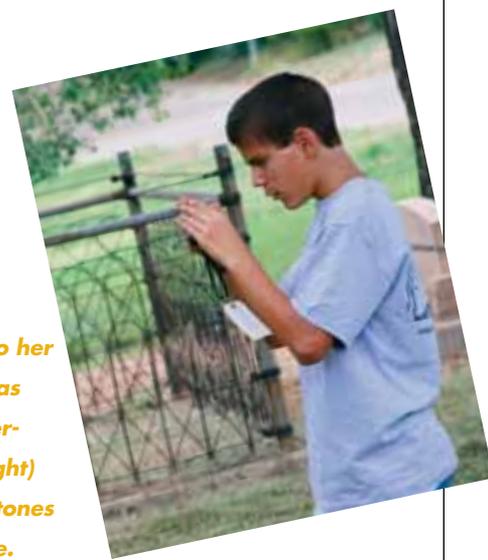




BACK *in* TIME

*Photographing tombstones,
writing down memories,
and charting pedigrees keep
teens in Flagstaff, Arizona,
involved in family history.*

BY HEIDI LEWIS



When most people think of Arizona, they picture prickly cacti, rattlesnakes, and dusty desert mesas. Flagstaff, a city nestled high in the lush, green Arizona mountains, couldn't be more different. The city got its name from lumberjacks who had turned a towering Ponderosa pine into a flagpole to celebrate the Fourth of July more than a hundred years ago.

The youth of the Flagstaff Arizona Stake carry on this tradition by waving high the banner of the gospel through their service and example. And although pine forests still blanket the hillsides, these days the youth are getting into a very different kind of tree—their family trees.

From Personal Progress Value Experiences and Value Projects, to Genealogy merit badges and a stakewide family history service project, the hearts of these children are turning to their fathers (see Malachi 4:6), and they are finding out just how fun family history can be.

Preserving the Past

Katherine Kitterman has always been curious about her great-grandmother, Clara Turner, who died when Katherine was just a baby. She found some taped interviews of her great-grandmother and began transcribing them. Eventually this became her Individual Worth Value Project. She has spent dozens of hours at the computer recording her great-grandmother's history so other family members can read and enjoy it.

"Some people might think it is boring, but it's fun," says Katherine. "The first thing to do is to ask questions. Then you become more curious. The more you find out about someone, the more you get to know them."

Katherine says this project taught her how important it is to keep a journal. "I'm really interested

Katherine Kitterman (above) found out who her great-grandmother was while transcribing interviews. Jordan Gee (right) photographed gravestones for an online database.

in the everyday things my great-grandmother did, like chores and school, sewing rag rugs, or making silk from cocoons on mulberry trees. This made me realize that things we don't think are very out of the ordinary or exciting would be very interesting to our posterity."

When Austin Johnson asked his grandfather to help him complete the Genealogy merit badge requirements, he didn't realize how much he'd enjoy researching his family tree. "I found a bunch of cool ties in my ancestors, like Benjamin F. Johnson, who was one of the best friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It makes me feel grateful that they decided to go through what wasn't necessarily easy for them, because it changed how I live."

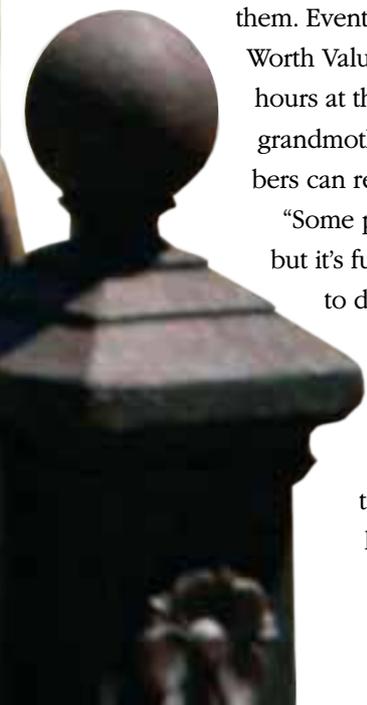
"It is nice to know where you come from," says Natania Dirlam. "When you do your family history, you find out about different cultures. You kind of stand out in your own little way."

Graveside Service

A few years ago, Brig Sorenson mapped out and recorded thousands of graves at the local cemetery for his Eagle project. Picking up where Brig left off, the stake arranged an ongoing service project to photograph the hundreds of gravestones in the cemetery for an Internet genealogy database.

"I'd never been in a graveyard before," says Kirsten Barraclough. "But it was fun to see the names of all the people who died. It was nice to know you are serving others."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAWN QUICK AND HEIDI LEWIS





These teens from the Flagstaff Arizona Stake completed Personal Progress projects, earned Genealogy merit badges, and helped compile an Internet database, but most of all, they learned just how much fun it can be to get involved in family history work.



“Some days I come to the cemetery and I feel really sad,” says Jessica McGuire, whose uncle and grandfather are buried there. “But this time I came and helped. It was a lovely feeling.”

Millions Waiting

For many youth, the reward for finding out so much about their ancestors was taking their names to the Snowflake Arizona Temple to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead.

“It was the neatest experience to go to the temple and do baptisms for the people in my family I had worked so hard to find,” says Janalie Wilkins. To complete her Individual Worth Value Project, she spent time at her local family history center learning how to use the Personal Ancestral File (PAF) computer program and researching her relatives on the Internet.

“At first, it seemed overwhelming,” admits Janalie. “But then I remembered the scripture about baptisms for the dead: ‘They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect’ (D&C 128:15). I have a testimony of that now. Doing genealogy work is very important and helps us grow closer to Heavenly Father.

“And it’s not just for old people,” she adds with a grin. “There are millions of people waiting for their work to be done.” **NE**

GENEALOGY JUMP START

Wondering how to get started? Several Duty to God and Personal Progress goals focus on personal and family history. Here are just a few ideas:

- Help make genealogy records available to people around the world by volunteering as an online indexer at FamilySearchIndexing.org.
- Get personal help at your local family history center.
- Choose an interesting event from an ancestor’s life and make a short movie about it.
- Take a family history class through your ward or branch.
- Contact your local cemetery and see if you can participate in a data recording or photography project. Then go with your family or Church group.
- Complete the Genealogy merit badge.
- Volunteer to record people telling their histories in your ward or at a local nursing home.
- Fill out your four-generation pedigree chart and submit it online at FamilySearch.org.
- Research family names to take to the temple for baptisms.
- Keep a journal. (Don’t forget pictures!)