

# The Heart of Genealogy

Robert, Peter, and Evan Ivie  
FamilySearch, University of Notre Dame, GeneSys Foundation  
robertashby.ivie@familysearch.org, pivie@nd.edu, evan@ivies.org

## ABSTRACT

This paper challenges genealogical technologists to add human interest to their systems. A number of genealogical systems that touch the heart as well as the mind are described. These systems provide individuals and families with identity, generate cohesiveness in groups, tie people to events and places, and add color and interest to our understanding of ancestors and kin. Some possible new systems are also proposed.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Genealogy is the identification of individuals and their relationships [4]. A pedigree identifies the ancestors of an individual. A descendant chart or a published family history identifies descendants. The traditional approach to genealogy has been to record identifying information (names, dates, places and links) on genealogical forms, in computer files, or in published family histories. We often get so caught up with the finding of facts that we fail to remember that we are dealing with real people who were born, married, struggled, lived, loved, and died, and who deserve our appreciation and admiration.

In this paper we will review various efforts that have been used to maintain and enhance human interest in genealogical information. We will then propose a few future efforts that might be undertaken to make genealogy more than sterile facts, and that will put a heart into genealogy. We will finally draw some conclusions.

## 2. RELATED WORK

We will describe a number projects that have been undertaken to attempt to put the heart into genealogy.

In 1989 we created an LDS General Authorities Cousins Database from GEDCOMs of the LDS General Authorities and their wives. We used it to test some algorithms we had developed for finding cousins. We reported our results at GenTech. We cite this effort here, not for the algorithms that were developed, but for the reaction we received to the results.

As part of the Nauvoo Pageant put on each summer attendees are provided with a list of the people portrayed, whom they relate to. The attendees are shown how they are related to the individual portrayed and provided a picture and a brief biography of their Nauvoo cousin.

During the Utah Sesquicentennial people were provided with a description of the lives of their pioneer ancestors [2]. The results of this project will be reviewed for conclusions

relating to human interest information and how it might be presented.

Recently FamilySearch Family Tree has started allowing the attachment of pictures, stories, and sources to their pedigrees through the windows on individuals (with the addition of a couple of clicks).

Each of these efforts have tried in various ways to put the heart back into genealogy. We will describe how well they succeeded in the following section.

## 3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Family history systems have generally been focused on names, dates, and places. The previous section outlined a few projects that have attempted to touch hearts as well as to provide facts. In this section we will identify four of the ways in which people can generate systems that add color and interest to pedigrees. These include the following: supplying a sense of personal and family identity, generating brotherhood and cohesion, motivating interest in, and connectivity to, events and places, and bringing our ancestors and kin to life.

### 3.1 Personal and Family Identity

An article in the New York Times recently reported on research done at Emory University which found that children “who know a lot about their families tend to do better when they face challenges”. The conclusion reached was that “the more children knew about their family’s history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned.” [5]

Some of the questions the children were asked included the following:

- Do you know where your grandparents grew up?
- Do you know where your mom and dad went to high school?
- Do you know where your parents met?
- Do you know of something really terrible that happened to your family?

While many of the family history systems described in this FHT Workshop allow such information to be entered as a note or comment, not many of them are designed to call attention to and highlight human interest information, and make it easily accessible to younger and older users. The Emory University professors concluded that the “Do You



Figure 1: Nauvoo Family Search Center

Know ...” test “turned out to be the single best predictor of children’s emotional health and happiness.” They were “blown away” by the result (as are we).

At the moment, the memories (photos and stories) option in FamilySearch Family Tree comes the closest to providing this capability but fails in at least two important respects: it does not allow for living people to be part of the system, and does not seem to cater to younger users. Some functions in ancestry.com also come close to helping. Over the past year we have conducted workshops for Primary children and youth at the Nauvoo FamilySearch Center (see figure 1) which have been extremely successful. But there is a desperate need for tools to help these workshops. It would be an interesting challenge to work on children and youth systems and to consider sound, color, and animation for these systems.

Technology offers a way to counter the current assault on the American family. Family History systems provide some hope that tools can be developed which can assist children, youth, and adults to “develop an intergeneration identity” and to “understand their family narrative” [5].

## 3.2 Brotherhood

The old adage that “blood is thicker than water” is a way of saying kinship is often stronger than friendship. Many people are interested in knowing if someone is a cousin, even a distant cousin. In 1998 we created an LDS General Authorities Database from GEDCOMs of the LDS General Authorities and their wives. We used it to test some algorithms we had developed for finding cousins and reported our results at GenTech.

As an afterthought we sent the results to almost eighty General Authorities and their wives. We were amazed to receive thank-you letters from over half of those we sent packets to. They expressed gratitude for our efforts and for the information they received. It was reported that Elder Ballard walked into Elder Holland’s office and called him “cuz”, and that President Hinckley noted at a General Authority training meeting that we are more closely related than we realize. President Faust sent an extensive letter expressing his gratitude.

This exercise was repeated in the Edgemont 13th Ward in

## 13th Ward Cousins for Dell Cox

Sherry Kay Cox (Bryan Dell COX)

### 1st cousins

Dorothy A. Bramhall's Dad (Otis Lysander TERRY) -- 1 times removed

### 2nd cousins

Sharon Bateman's Dad (Thomas John REES) -- 1 times removed

### 3rd cousins

Sharon Bateman (Thomas John REES)

### 6th cousins

Edmund C. King (Mary DIBBLE) -- 1 times removed

Eugene Bramhall's Dad (Ezra PERRY) -- 2 times removed

### 7th cousins

Scott R. Baird (Rees DAVIES)

Juna Griffiths (Thomas POWERS) -- 2 times removed

### 8th cousins

Daniel J. Letham (William ADAMSON)

Larry E. Noble (Ezra PERRY)

Geri Engemann's mom (Jacob PARKER)

Camile C. Anderson's Mom (Jacob PARKER) -- 1 times removed

Betty Jo Ivie (Alice RICHARDS) -- 1 times removed

Evan L. Ivie (Walter POWERS) -- 1 times removed

Kyle E. Bateman's Mom (Jacob PARKER) -- 1 times removed

Velma L. Allen (Thomas DIBBLE) -- 1 times removed

Susan Brown (Walter POWERS) -- 1 times removed

Tamara Johnson's Mom (Walter POWERS) -- 1 times removed

R. Michael Allen (Ralph SHEPHERD (SHEPARD)) -- 1 times removed

Bill Fillmore's ancestor (Thomas BURGESS) -- 1 times removed

Julee J. Bateman (Jacob PARKER) -- 2 times removed

Kyle E. Bateman's Dad (Jacob PARKER) -- 2 times removed

Linda Ritchie (Jacob PARKER) -- 2 times removed

David Adams' dad (Jacob PARKER) -- 2 times removed

Jean Bailey's dad (Thomas POPE) -- 2 times removed

Steven Lynn Kay (Alice RICHARDS) -- 2 times removed

Carol A. Allred (Jacob PARKER) -- 3 times removed

Q. Bryant Hatch (Thomas POPE) -- 3 times removed

Figure 2: Example of Ward Cousins

Provo in 1999 (see figure 2). Ward members commented on a greater sense of unity and love that existed in the ward after they found how closely they were related. The experiment has been repeated with perhaps twenty other groups in the past fifteen years with the same results. We call this type of interrelationship effort group linkage. One of the results is that members of the group seem to develop a higher sense of unity, harmony, fellowship and cohesion.

An alternative type of linkage is to find the interrelationship between a single individual and set of individuals. The Edgemont 13th Ward effort also provided each ward member with a list of the U.S. Presidents to whom they were related and the LDS Church Presidents also. We might call this unilinkage (similar to unicasting in networking).

An even simpler goal is to answer the question: Am I related to a given person (perhaps someone whom I have just met)? Again in comparison to networking, this might be called person-to-person linking (similar to point-to-point communication).

There are an infinite number of questions that might be of interest to answer. For example:

- Am I a descendant or cousin to any of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence?
- Did any of my ancestors fight in the Revolutionary War?
- Am I a cousin to Abraham Lincoln?
- Did any of my relatives live on Staten Island?
- Am I related to the author of this novel that I am reading?
- Do I have any cousins living within 10 miles of Interstate 80 between Omaha and Cheyenne?
- Am I related to anyone in this meeting that I am attending?

### 3.3 Interest in Places and Events

As part of the Nauvoo Pageant put on each summer since 2005, attendees are provided with a list of the early Nauvoo people (those portrayed in the pageant) to whom they are related (see figure 3). The attendees are shown how they are related to the individual and provided a picture of the person and a brief biography of each. Of all of the pre-pageant activities the pageant staff tell us that this activity is the most popular. The pageant runs for about a month each year and there are about 5,000 people who try this activity. Eliza Roxey Snow is at the top of this list of early Nauvoo people who are cousins to pageant attendees. She is a cousin to 87.7% of the attendees. Parley Parker Pratt is second at 87.1%. Brigham Young turns out to be the closest relative for about 12% of the attendees. We have not done a controlled survey of the reactions of people to this activity but we have observed a high level of interest.

On July 24th and 25th for the Utah Sesquicentennial we provided people with a page listing their Utah pioneer ancestors, brief biographies (electronically generated in sentences) of those ancestors (see figure 4). We also added a picture of one of their ancestors. We were able to generate a page for about 5,000 of the 7,000 people who came to the BYU Harmon building during the two days of the celebration (see figure 5). Our goal was to directly link each individual with the settling of Utah so that they felt a personal and direct connection to the event. We did not measure success with a survey but we did observe their reactions. There were smiles, tears, and hugs. Young people asked questions and were motivated to learn more about the history of the State. After all, they were their ancestors who had accomplished this great feat in history. A little old lady from a small Utah town hugged one of the developers with tears in her eyes. This was not just a page from a history book, but these were her great-grandparents who had done this.

We created a version of this system for the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown, Virginia in 2007. We also did one for the founding of Saint Louis. These were very successful for LDS Church members but failed badly for non-LDS. The data used for making the cousin connections at the Anniversary of Jamestown, Virginia in came from the LDS Ancestral File which has mostly the ancestors of those who are LDS. Since our failures with these two systems we have been working on a new way of populating a cousin-generating database that will work well for those who are non-LDS as well as LDS.

NauvooPageantCousins.org
Evan Leon Ivie | signout

---

You are related to the following:

**Mary Ann Frost**  
is your 4th cousin 8 times removed

**Brigham Young**  
is your 4th cousin 8 times removed

**Phoebe Whittemore Carter**  
is your 5th cousin 4 times removed

**Heber Chase Kimball**  
is your 5th cousin 4 times removed

**Eliza Roxey Snow**  
is your 5th cousin 4 times removed

**Emma Hale**  
is your 5th cousin 6 times removed

**Anna Bibbins Chaffee**  
is your 5th cousin 6 times removed

**Parley Parker Pratt**  
is your 6th cousin 5 times removed

**Vilate Murray**  
is your 6th cousin 5 times removed

**Joseph Smith**  
is your 6th cousin 8 times removed

**Hyrum Smith**  
is your 6th cousin 8 times removed

**Wilford Woodruff**  
is your 9th cousin 8 times removed



**Mary Ann Frost**  
is your 4th cousin 8 times removed

/ Andrew Clarke \

Scotto Clark	- Siblings -	Susanna Clark
Scotto Clark	- 1st cousins -	Andrew Gray
Mark Clark	- 2nd cousins -	Andrew Gray
Daniel Clark	- 3rd cousins -	Susannah (susan) Gray
Mercy Clark	- 4th cousins -	Mary Ann Frost
Eunice Byington	- Once removed -	
Philemon Rogers	- Twice removed -	
Noah Rogers	- 3 times removed -	
Theodore Rogers	- 4 times removed -	
Hannah Lucretia Rogers	- 5 times removed -	
Hannah Cropper	- 6 times removed -	
Ruth Ashby	- 7 times removed -	
Evan Leon Ivie	- 8 times removed -	



**Mary Ann Frost Young** was born at Groton, Vermont, Jan. 14th, 1809. At the age of three years she, with her father's family, moved to the state of Maine and embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the year 1835, being baptized by David W. Patten. She married Nathan Stearns in May 1831, and by him she had one daughter. Her husband died one year and a half after marriage. She subsequently moved to Kirtland, Ohio, when she became acquainted

Figure 3: Example of Connection to Nauvoo Pioneer

### Marjorie Pay's Pioneer Ancestry

**William Minshall Evans**, your great-grandfather, was born on March 12, 1825, at Liverpool, Lancashire, England Or Holy Well, Flintshire, Wales. On November 28, 1841 William was baptized into the church. On October 17, 1850, he and 227 other converts set sail from Liverpool aboard the Joseph Badger, arriving in New Orleans on November 22, 1850. July 15, 1852 William married Charlotte Jarrold Hyder at Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, UT. On January 5, 1877, at the age of 52, William Minshall Evans died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, UT. Your lineage through William is William Evans > Martha Evans > Georgetta Paxman > Marjorie Pay.

On August 21, 1821 at Buckland, Kent, England, your grandfather, **Richard Pay**, was born. On February 26, 1849 Richard was baptized into the church. On May 25, 1856, he and 856 other converts set sail from Liverpool aboard the Horizon, arriving in Boston on June 30, 1856. In 1856 Richard crossed the plains as a member of the John A. Hunt Company. In 1859, at Nephi, Juab, Utah, Richard married Mary Goble. On April 18, 1893, at the age of 72, Richard Pay died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, Utah. Your lineage through Richard is Richard Pay > Phillip Pay > Marjorie Pay.

**Mary Goble Pay**, your grandmother, was born on June 2, 1843, at Brighton, Sussex, England, England. On November 13, 1855 Mary was baptized into the church. In 1856 Mary crossed the plains as a member of the John A. Hunt Company. In 1859, at Nephi, Juab, Utah, Mary married Richard Pay. On September 25, 1913, at the age of 70, Mary Goble Pay died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, Utah.

Your great-grandfather, **William Goble**, was born on February 25, 1817, in Singleton, Sussex, England. In 1841, at (St. Nicholas Church), Brighton, Sussex, England, William married Mary Penfold. On March 27, 1855 William was baptized into the church. In 1856 William crossed the plains as a member of the John A. Hunt Company. On March 9, 1898, at the age of 81, William Goble died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, UT.

On September 26, 1814 at Chailley, Sussex, England, your great-grandmother, **Mary Penfold Goble**, was born. In 1841, at (St. Nicholas Church), Brighton, Sussex, England, Mary married William Goble. On November 5, 1855 Mary was baptized into the church. In 1856 Mary crossed the plains as a member of the John A. Hunt Company. On December 11, 1856, at the age of 42, Mary Penfold Goble died and was buried at (City Cemetery) Salt Lake City, S-Lk, UT.


**William Paxman**, your great-grandfather, was born on October 23, 1836, at Colchester, Essex, England. On June 0, 1852 William was baptized into the church. March 3, 1855 William married Ann Rushen Keys at London, Middlesex, England. On May 25, 1856, he and 856 other converts set sail from Liverpool aboard the Horizon, arriving in Boston on June 30, 1856. On October 12, 1897, at the age of 61, William Paxman died and was buried at , Nephi, Juab, Utah.

On September 11, 1830 at Danbury, Little Badden, Essex, England, your great-grandmother, **Ann Rushen Keys Paxman**, was born. On September 13, 1851 Ann was baptized into the church. March 3, 1855 Ann married William Paxman at London, Middlesex, England. On May 25, 1856, she and 856 other converts set sail from Liverpool aboard the Horizon, arriving in Boston on June 30, 1856. On April 10, 1919, at the age of 89, Ann Rushen Keys Paxman died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, UT.

On April 22, 1801 at Danbury, Essex, Engl, your great-great-grandfather, **Joseph Keys**, was born. November 4, 1827 Joseph married Mary Ann Rushen at Chelmsford, Essex, Engl. On October 17, 1852 Joseph was baptized into the church. On June 13, 1877, he and 186 other converts set sail from Liverpool aboard the Wyoming, arriving in New York on June 23, 1877. On April 23, 1878, at the age of 77, Joseph Keys died and was buried at American Fork, Ut, UT.

On May 10, 1806 at Swoffell, Suffolk, England, your great-great-grandfather, **James Paxman**, was born. In 1831, at Colchester, Essex, England, James married Esther Reynolds. On Nov 1875, at the age of 69, James Paxman died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, UT.

Your great-grandmother, **Charlotte Jarrold Hyder Evans**, was born on September 26, 1834, in Cambridge, Cambridge, England. On March 27, 1848 Charlotte was baptized into the church. In 1852, at Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, UT, Charlotte married William Minshall Evans. On December 2, 1906, at the age of 72, Charlotte Jarrold Hyder Evans died and was buried at Nephi, Juab, UT.



William Evans

Figure 4: Example of Utah Pioneer Ancestors

### 3.4 Sense of Familiarity

A fourth possible human interest effect that a genealogical program might provide is allow the user to feel a familiarity with a given person, perhaps an ancestor or a cousin, almost as if they knew them. The FamilySearch Family Tree has achieved this over the past few months, with the addition of the photos and stories mentioned above [1].



## 4. OTHER POSSIBLE EFFORTS

Let us propose a few new efforts that could be undertaken that would provide human interest to genealogists.

We have done some experimentation of a smartphone app that can create a Personalized GPS tour of the sites in a given area related to a given family. For example when someone comes to Nauvoo they could be guided the locations of the original homes of the individuals ancestors, where they worked, where their children went to school, etc.

A Genealogy-Based Kiosk could be created that provided customized connections to the site where the kiosk is. For example, we have had some discussion with the Lincoln museum in Springfield about a kiosk that would tell visitors how they are related to the Lincolns, the Todds, etc.

The third idea is LDS based. LDS members have two responsibilities. They are to identify their kindred dead and they are to perform the temple ordinances needed by those kindred dead [3]. An Extended Family Ordinance Request could be designed to provide not only the ordinance cards but also a card that shows the connection of the patron to the individual whose ordinances are being done (see figure 6). Also it could provide a brief biographical sketch of the common ancestor and of the individual whose work is being done.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

From our experiences we are convinced that adding a human interest component to a genealogical program or system will greatly increase the number of people who enjoy using the system, the amount of time they spend on the system, and the benefit they obtain from it.

## 6. REFERENCES

- [1] FamilySearch website. <https://familysearch.org/>, 2014. [Online; accessed 19-March-2014].
- [2] President Hinkley Continues to Share Pioneer Message. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1997/07/news-of-the-church?lang=eng>, 2014. [Online; accessed 19-March-2014].
- [3] The Joy of Redeeming the Dead. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/10/the-joy-of-redeeming-the-dead?lang=eng>, 2014. [Online; accessed 19-March-2014].
- [4] Regional Representatives Seminar, April 3, 1987. "The terms 'family history' and 'genealogy' are synonymous for Latter-day Saints, Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, said. "The process by which we identify our place in our eternal family is call genealogy. Genealogy is family history".
- [5] B. Feiler. The stories that bind us. *New York Sunday Times*, 2013.

## Centennial activities gearing up



Photo by Laurel Cayn  
Neil Dastur are reconstructing a log cabin owned by descendants of the pioneers. Cabin will be part of a frontier scene in "Pioneer Rendezvous."

### 'Rendezvous' to re-create life on pioneer trail

PROVO, UTAH

For those who could not travel the pioneer trail, but who still have a desire to taste life on the frontier, a simulation of the trail — with some of the dramas and difficulties — is being staged on the campus of BYU.

It's called the Pioneer Rendezvous, one of the principal activities of the Church-sponsored Sesquicentennial activities. The Rendezvous includes nine activities aimed at re-creating life on the pioneer trail.

It will take place July 24-25 on the BYU campus at the Deseret Towers Field and the Harman Conference Center. Admission is free. Activities run 2-7 p.m. each day.

The Rendezvous was organized in conjunction with the Sesquicentennial Spectacular, as a means of helping members of the Church gain appreciation for the life and faith of the pioneers.

"To watch the Rendezvous unfold has been a sweet experience," explained Anne Seamons, who chairs the committee with her husband, David.

"The celebration of the pioneers is really a celebration of Christ, and their faith in Him. This is not just about the pioneers, it is about His power that sustained them. Whether members have pioneer ancestors or not, they can enjoy this celebration of Christ."

The Rendezvous is organized in a fair-like fashion where visual displays and demonstrations will simulate the trek.

Such displays include a pioneer trek where participants will experience the conditions of the trail, including pulling a handcart through soft sand, over sharp rocks, across a river, and cooking over a fire.

Other displays include:

- A frontier town with an 80-foot facade replicating an actual town in the 1800s with a gun shop, leather shop and general store.
- A pioneer camp where participants can greet some of those who completed the re-enactment of the pioneer trail.
- An Indian village, which will portray the lives, customs and traditions of the people who inhabited the land when the pioneers arrived.

• A 30-minute historical Church video, featuring the First Presidency, to be shown in the auditorium of the Harman Conference Center.

• Family photo corner where participants can be photographed with a pioneer backdrop and stagecoach.

The most popular activity, however, is expected to be the ancestral pioneer past activity where a special computer program will track pioneer ancestors.

By submitting names of an individual and parent, participants will be able to determine if any ancestors traveled the pioneer trail, as well as the company they traveled with, and possibly biographical and pictorial information as well.

This activity, said Sister Seamons, is "guaranteed to quicken your heartbeat as you see the name and face of one of these valiant early Saints who could be your relative."

CHURCH NEWS • WEEK ENDING JULY 12, 1997—11

### Deaths

than 250 musical compositions and a member of the general board of the Young Women Mutual Improvement Association from 1961-69, died June 28, 1997, in Bountiful, Utah.

Among her compositions were "A House Becomes a Home When There's Love Inside," "Dear Earthly Father," and "Wedding of the Rails." She had a radio and TV show called "Lyrics for Lorraine." She also served on the Davis County Centennial Committee, and on various boards and guilds.

• William Miller Davies, 87, who served 13 years as the first stake president in eastern Canada, died June 27, 1997, in Etobicoke, Ontario. He was married to Olive Wise Davies for 55 years.

He followed the example of his mother, who was among the first members of the Church in Toronto, and was baptized at age 16. He served as district president, stake president, stake patriarch and temple sealer.

The demands of presiding over a stake that covered the greater portion of Ontario required extensive time and travel. This was coupled with his profession as a salesman.

Figure 5: Newspaper Article about Interest in Utah Pioneer Ancestors

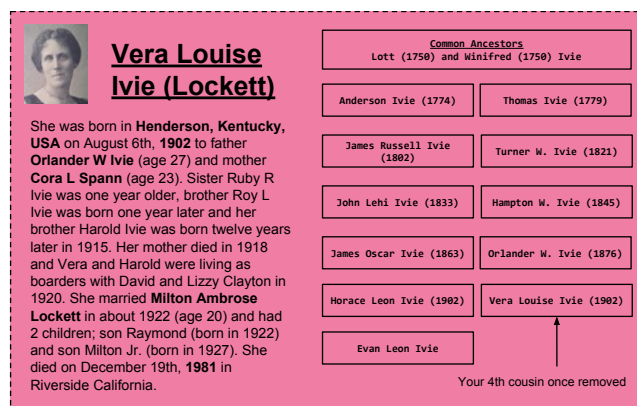


Figure 6: Example Reverse Side of Ordinance Card