

4H Western Heritage Project Genealogy Activities for Level 3

Ashley Powell
Graduate Student in Agriculture Education Department
Montana State University

Level 3

Congratulations! You have made it to the last level in the Genealogy activity! You have done some intense research and the end is near! Hopefully you have learned a lot about your family so far and are getting more and more excited to possibly take on the persona of one of your family members. For this level, you will be researching your 6th and 7th generation. At every new generation of relatives you encounter, you must stick with your original choice of maternal or paternal. Husbands and wives tended to have multiple marriages and a lot of children. It can get messy, and I congratulate you on making it this far down your lineage. It is no small feat!

For this level, continue searching for your relatives using the tips from level 2. If you choose, you can tie this level into your persona activity by selecting an ancestor to represent. This is not a requirement: just a suggestion to make your genealogy research “come to life”.

When you get this far back in your research, the spelling of names can differ from how we spell them today. When conducting a search, for names that can be either male or female (such as Gale-Gail, Gene-Jean, Marion-Marian, Frances-Francis, Leslie-Lesley) indicate whether the individual was a man or woman if you can determine that from the document. It eliminates confusion. As I was conducting research on my family, my grandmother’s cousin’s name was Coy, however, when I was searching for him, multiple spellings of his name popped up. There was Coi, Coit, Coay, and Coy in the records. People back then were not as educated, and definitely had no form of spell check.

Searching for women in your family can be a challenge, whether you are researching your great-grandmother or your great-great-great-great grandmother. You may find women recorded under their maiden (birth) name or their married name. Married names can also pose a problem. Some women were married to more than one man in their lifetime due to harsh living conditions, violent conflicts, and service in wars. It may be best to first search for a woman by her maiden name.

Along with surnames and spelling, the name of cities people lived in can be difficult to find as well. It may be that the town no longer exists or only the county name is listed. If the town is no longer, well, a town, and the county names is available then record the county and the state. For example: Harris County, Texas.

Of the ancestor you may choose to take as your persona, make sure you know their first and last name (i.e. maiden name if single in the year 1860 or married name in the year of 1860), birth date and place, death date and place, and where they were living in the year of interest. Once you have all of this information, in a separate document, write a short history of the person's life. If you are lucky enough to find a picture, include the picture in the short history. You may not be related to Jesse James, but every family as a story all their own.