

## *100 Years of History As Seen Through the Study of Two Beaumont Families*

### **Lesson 4 - Tracing Ancestors**

#### **Overview:**

Trying to figure out who you are and how you fit in the scheme of things is basic human nature. The desire to search for your “roots,” to discover who your ancestors were, is a yearning that many have. In fact, it has become a major pastime in America. People want to gather information to understand the people who preceded them, what they went through, and how their experiences shape who we are now. The research and study of our ancestral heritage is called genealogy.

The way many people find their past is through a self-examination called a genealogical chart or family tree. The tree starts with you — as the trunk, with your parents as the first two branches, then your grandparents as the next four, and on from there. For some people building the tree is pretty easy for the first few branches but finding out about who preceded their oldest living relative requires research.

A good way to begin this search is to find someone, preferably an older person, who knows about your family. This person can be a grandparent, a great-aunt or -uncle, or a close family friend. Ask this elder to tell you all he or she can about your parents, grand-parents, great-grandparents. Ask him or her to go as far back as he or she can in remembering your ancestors’ names, relationships (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), birth dates, etc. You may be surprised at how delighted older people are to talk about the past and to know you are interested. If possible, use a tape recorder to take down what your elder says—including stories about your ancestors. Tape recording an historical interview is called “oral history.” Anyone can do an oral history. It is a good way to learn how “to do” history for yourself.

Sometimes we get stuck when we begin to do genealogy. We may not have any elders to tell us about our past or we may not get enough information to piece together our story. A good preliminary step is to write down everything you know or can find out about yourself involving your birth date, place/hospital, your doctor, your weight, length, etc. Most of this information is on your birth certificate. After this you will need to look to other sources to fill in the blanks. There are many excellent sources waiting for your use including public records such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, death certificates, census records, church records (baptisms, marriages, etc.), old papers (diaries, letters, family Bibles), and old newspapers.

You can also seek professional help free of charge. There are historical libraries in the area with librarians to assist people like you with questions and point them in the right direction with their genealogical research. Some of these places include: Tyrrell Historical Library, 695 Pearl Street, Beaumont, Texas; Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, 3939 Turtle Creek Drive, Port Arthur, Texas; Sam Houston Regional Library, Liberty, Texas; and Clayton Library

Student Handout #4

in Houston, Texas.

A new way to find out about genealogy is through the Internet. Search for information about your last name. Log on to the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) who may have already done research into your ancestors. Surf for information about your ethnic group. This information may provide links on how to find out more about your past.

### **Objective:**

- \* **Students will know that they are part of the documentary past through an introduction to genealogy using the McFaddin and French family trees as examples.**
- \* **Students will be introduced to the basics of genealogy research discussing the use of libraries, Internet, and other sources in developing genealogical charts (family trees) and similar information.**

### **Student Handouts & Transparencies:**

1. Student Handout 4a - Mamie McFaddin's family tree
2. Student Handout 4b - Avie French's family tree
3. Transparency and Student Handout 4c - a blank family tree
4. Student Handout 4d - "A Letter from the San Jacinto Battlefield"
5. Transparency 4e - historical records of Mamie McFaddins life
6. Transparency 4f - census information (1900) about the W.P.H. McFaddin family
7. Transparency 4g - census information (1880) about the John J. French, Jr. family
8. Student Handout 4h - a page from John J. French's ledger (1831)
9. Student Handout 4i - a letter to Mamie McFaddin from her mother (1912)

### **Activities:**

1. Study Mamie McFaddin's family tree, Student Handout 4a.
2. Study Avie French's family tree, Student Handout 4b.
3. Fill out a family tree, Student Handout 4c (a blank genealogical chart).
4. Read the letter from San Jacinto Battlefield, Student Handout 4d.
5. Examine materials related to Mamie McFaddin's birth, Student Handout 4e. Locate and record evidence from the personal letters that verify the birth date of Mamie Lousie McFaddin.
6. Examine a page from John J. French ledger, Student Handout 4h.
7. Bring copies of birth certificates, newspaper accounts of weddings, birth announcements, old Bible records, old photographs, etc. about your family members that could supply information for your family tree. Share this information with the class.

### **Questions:**

Student Handout #4

1. Using Student Handout 4b, identify both of Avie French’s grandmothers and their birth years.

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2. Using Student Handout 4a, find out how James Turner Caldwell is related to Ida Regina Caldwell.

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3. Write some interesting and useful questions you might ask an elder in an oral history interview about your past.

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4. Did your oral interview uncover any information you did not know about an ancestor?

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