

genealogy notes

- Approximately **35 million Americans** are linked by blood to one (or more) of the 102 pilgrims who came to America on the **Mayflower** in 1620.
- It has been estimated that nearly **half of all Americans** today can trace their family history to at least one person who passed through the Port of New York at **Ellis Island**.
- The United States has taken a **census every 10 years since 1790**. The most recent publicly available census is that of 1940. Each census lists the people alive in the United States at that time (your ancestors!) and identifies interesting information about each person.
- 3 million men fought in the **Civil War**. Depending on your age, these men could have been your 2nd or 3rd great-grandfathers. If all of your ancestors were in the United States at the time, that means you could have had up to **eight 2nd great-grandfathers** and **sixteen 3rd great-grandfathers** who fought! Fascinating records exist for many of those ancestors who fought.
- The **Homestead Act** of 1862 made public land available to anyone who was willing to pay a small filing fee and “improve” the land for five years. Before the act was repealed in 1934, over **1.6 million applications** were processed for **270 million acres** of public land. If your ancestors applied for land, very interesting family information can be available through these records.
- **1870** is an important year for African American genealogy. As the **first post-Civil War U.S. Census**, it was the first time **former slaves** were listed by name. Previously, only the slave owner was named and slaves were identified by a count.
- **Coats of arms** were used beginning around **1200 A.D.** Since knights wearing armor all looked alike, the shield of each was painted in a way that he could be recognized. Although many people today are interested in finding a coat of arms for their family, it is not as simple as finding one for your last name. There can be many coats of arms for a single last name, or none at all. A coat of arms is specific to a particular family, so you need to trace several generations of your ancestors to see if there is a coat of arms for *your* family.
- In 1917 and 1918, approximately **98% of men** under the age of 46 living in the United States completed a **World War I draft registration card**. Chances are, you had male ancestors who registered, and you can get a copy of their original draft registration card – an interesting document placing your ancestors in a major historical event.
- The vast majority of **African Americans** are **descendents of about 400,000 Africans** brought to North America as slaves in the 18th and 19th century. Most of these slaves came from a small section – only about 300 miles long – of the Atlantic coast between the Congo and Gambia rivers in East Africa.
- Anthropologists claim that **everyone on earth** is a **40th cousin**. That would mean that any two people can find at least one common ancestor who has lived since 800 A.D.
- The **1900 U.S. Census** was the **first to list Native Americans** living on reservations. Native Americans not living on reservations were listed beginning in 1860. In prior years, Native Americans were not listed at all unless they lived in settled areas, were taxed, and did not maintain a tribal affiliation.