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Give the Gift of Family History

by Barbara J Starmans

Traditions, warm-hearted reminiscences, and the joy of family are what make the holidays such an incredibly special time of year. This season of celebration is the perfect occasion to give the gift of family and to share your genealogy research with your loved ones in unique and innovative ways. Family history comes to life when the stories are combined with photographs and other media for gifts that will fascinate your kith and kin like those names and dates on pedigree charts never will.

Create an Heirloom Quilt

Create a family heirloom for the next generation! Use your inkjet printer to print your family photographs on fabric squares and assemble them into an ancestor quilt to keep those memories warm. Begin by treating squares of cotton fabric with Bubble Jet Set 2000 and once dry, use an iron to fuse your fabric to regular freezer paper so that it can be fed through your printer. After printing your photographs, remove the freezer paper and set the ink using Bubble Jet Rinse. The Bubble Jet products are available at craft stores or online through amazon.co.uk. Once you have your photo squares, assemble them with strips of a complimentary coloured fabric between them into a quilt top. Find out more about how to assemble your quilt on quilting.about.com.

Scrapbook

Use scrapbooking materials from a craft store like Hobbycraft and create a one of a kind scrapbook featuring your ancestors for a gift that will be treasured and displayed for years to come. If you are new to scrapbooking, look for a scrapbooking kit to get started. Always use copies of your photographs, old postcards, poems, letters, cards, recipes and documents rather than the originals and combine them with beautiful papers and embellishments like tiny frames, lace and ribbons and your imagination to make a keepsake book that will be cherished for a long time.

Jigsaw Puzzle

Have a jigsaw puzzle made from a cherished family photograph or any historic family document for one of the little ones on your holiday list. Many photo stores offer this service or you can order one online from myphotopuzzle.co.uk.

Family Calendar

A personalized calendar is the perfect gift to help everyone remember family all year long. Create a custom calendar online by uploading family photographs and highlighting family birthdays, anniversaries and other special days. Many photo websites, such as photobox.co.uk, offer easy to use templates and print on demand services for your custom calendar creation. Take the opportunity to showcase your genealogy research for your family members by incorporating old photographs or documents and highlight one special ancestor or family story each month.

Ancestor Book

Tell the story of your ancestors for your relatives to enjoy again and again. Ancestor books can be designed on your computer using software such as “My Memories Suite”, available online at mymemories.com or can be created directly online at photobox.co.uk, snapfish.co.uk, or lulu.com with copies printed on demand. Illustrate your family history with lots of photographs and documents and fill the story with detail to capture everyone’s imagination.

Autobiographies

If one of your older family members has a story to tell, but just doesn’t know where to start, Priceless Treasures at pricelesstreasuresonline.co.uk has the perfect gift to help anyone write an autobiography. Filled with hints and questions, these books beg to be written in and once completed, will become a precious family heirloom in years to come. The books can be personalized with your choice of title and a photograph of the author-to-be on the cover.

Family History DVD

Create a family history DVD that your family can enjoy again and again. Combine movie clips, old photographs and documents and set the compilation to music or record yourself narrating the family saga. There are a number of software packages available that will help you create DVDs and one of the easiest to use is RevealX, available for purchase and download at muvee.com. The RevealX software comes with several themes and has professional effects, transitions and animations allowing you to tell the story of your ancestors your way. Your epic movie can be saved on a DVD that can be played on any computer or DVD player.

Photographs and Memories

Even if your branch of the family wasn’t lucky enough to inherit your ancestors’ family portraits, you can have one created from a scanned copy of old family photograph. Printed on canvas and framed, an old portrait makes a great gift that is ready to take the place of honour over the fireplace. Photography services that will print photographs on canvas include photobox.co.uk and hellocanvas.co.uk.

Digital Photo Frames are always a welcome gift but make yours exceptional by pre-loading with family photographs for all to enjoy.

Holiday Ornaments

Remember your ancestors year after year by creating a unique holiday ornament from an old family photograph. Use miniature frames from the craft store and scanned vintage photographs to create an irreplaceable holiday ornament or order ornaments online by uploading your photographs to snapfish.com and choosing a design. Frame small photographs of all your ancestors and use the frames to make a family wreath to greet your visitors during the festive season.

Family Recipe Cookbook

Showcase your great-grandmother's recipe for pea soup and your great aunt's favorite scone recipe in a family recipe book so that younger generations can experience the culinary memories of the past. Illustrate your recipe book with scanned copies of handwritten recipes and old family photographs. Many websites, including photobox.co.uk and blurb.co.uk have custom templates designed especially for creating cookbooks with an option to order just one copy or a copy for every family member on your holiday list.