

Genealogy Rocks!

Family Trees Provide Many Myths

Genealogy does have myths, or false stories. See if your family has ever referred to one of these fictional fantasies.

Myth: One of your ancestors was a "Cherokee Princess." Tribes didn't have princesses, there were however the occasional



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daughters of a chief and honored or beloved women, such as Nancy Ward of the Cherokee or "The Lily of the Mohawk."

Myth: One of your ancestors was a stowaway. He came to America hidden in the bowels of a ship. No record of his immigration exists. Often this myth is continued because searching for his name on ship's manifests is done with an inflexible exploration of possible spellings. Believing that a surname can be only spelled one way is rather naive.

Myth: One of your ancestors changed the spelling of his name at Ellis Island; Surnames did not change at Ellis Island, however

you can believe that names could have later been "morphed" to become more American. Spellings may have changed by a person's lack of interest in spelling, or inability to read or write. Hard for us to imagine, but hundreds of years ago, spelling wasn't important.

Myth: Three of your ancestors were brothers. They immigrated together, one went north, one went south and the third went west. They never met or found each other again. Perhaps these three men were not brothers or even related. How many Smiths, Jones, or Johnson's were on that ship? Family members usually stuck together for comfort and safety when they immigrated.

Myths can be perpetrated by wishful thinking or by taking the easy research path. Good research techniques and attention to facts can squelch myths that may grow in your family tree.

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