

# HISTORIC ROOTS

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## STAYING CONNECTED

What does history have to do with me? Lots of people ask that question. That was then, this is now. There is no connection.

They're wrong. History is the study of the past and of how the world got to be the way it is now. So it has to do with everyone. Everyone who ever lived. Everyone who is living now.

But it is also true that history touches all of us in a very personal way.

My grandmother was born in 1888, not long before the famous blizzard of that year. A lot happened during her lifetime. Cars and airplanes. Electric power. Radio and television. Two world wars. The atom bomb. Women's right to vote. The income tax and social security. The Empire State Building. The Great Depression. Years before she died, men landed on the moon. When she died, the world was a very different place from the one she had been born into.

She didn't make any of that happen, but she lived through it all. Everything that happened changed her own life. It changed the way we all live now as well.

My children and I remember her stories of a



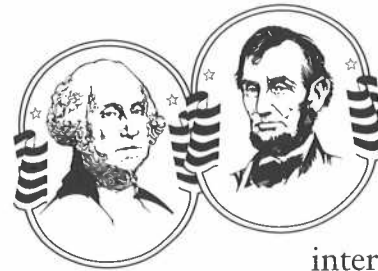


*My great-grandfather and his second wife.*

*Grandpa + Grandma Gantz*

life very different from ours. The pictures she showed us of stiff women in long, dark dresses and stiff men in dark suits look ancient and unfamiliar. But these are our relatives. Some of them were born in foreign countries. Some were born here. But their parents or grandparents had come here from somewhere else years before. Where did they come from? Why did they come? Their stories and lives are part of my family's history. They are also part of the history of this country.

One of my great-grandfathers actually touched history. And history touched him. In the 1860s, Abraham Lincoln came to Cincinnati to make a speech. A boy stood on one side of him, a girl on the other. On the stage, as he



spoke, Lincoln rested a hand on each head. The boy was my great-grandfather. One of his great

interests was George

Washington. Maybe this was because they had the same birthday, February 22. He read and talked about George Washington all his life. We still have some of his books about Washington and about American history.

What is interesting is that when my great-grandfather was little, there were people living who had been alive when George Washington was.



*My grandmother, seated center, with her parents and sister at Niagara Falls.*



*My grandmother and my daughter in 1967.*

When I was little, there was a big Memorial Day parade every year in New York City. Taking part in it were men and women, all very old, who had been born as slaves. Many more marchers had been born to parents who had been slaves.

Marching proudly in those parades were also men who had fought in the Spanish-American War in 1898. In the Memorial Day parade in Middlebury, today's children can still see a few very old veterans of World War I, which ended in 1918. Seeing these people makes the history of our times more real and more personal. History happens not in books, but to people.

So history is close to us. History is part of our lives. It is in news stories about the day's



*My daughter and granddaughter in 2000. All our lives reach back into the past and forward into the future. We touch history. And we help make it.*

happenings. It is in the buildings and monuments we see in towns and along the sides of roads. It is in the books we read, the songs we sing, the programs we watch. It is in furniture and photographs. We touch it in our families and in the people we know and meet.

And through them, history touches us and becomes alive.

ANN E. COOPER  
*Editor*

### Rooting Around

How has history touched you? How has it touched members of your family? People you know?

A timeline of your life, or of a family member's life, can help you see how much history has been made in your life and theirs. Timelines of older people reach far into the past. And through their descendants far into the future too.