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Family Folklore

Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service

4-H Club Bulletin

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4-H 1330

Family Folklore

A 4-H FOLK PATTERNS PROJECT

Acknowledgments

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Preface

4-H FOLKPATTERNS is a project of the Michigan 4-H — Youth Programs and the Folk Arts Division of the Michigan State University Museum. It was initiated with a Youth Projects Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency.

4-H FOLKPATTERNS is designed primarily for youths who want to learn more about themselves, their families, and their communities. It is an opportunity for youths, either as individuals or in groups, to explore in an organized way the various factors and influences that have affected and continue to affect the objects, traditions, and organizations that exist in their communities. It is an opportunity for them to explore the local history of their towns, their families, and their own lives. It's also a chance to discover the unwritten history around them.

The word FOLKPATTERNS was coined to describe the traditions (patterns of life) of people (folk). 4-H FOLKPATTERNS projects should present an enjoyable challenge for youths and volunteer leaders and result in meaningful outcomes for everyone involved—youths, leaders, and members of the community.

4-H FOLKPATTERNS is a special type of 4-H activity. Some projects may take quite a bit of advance planning. Research (or finding out information in an organized way) can be fun, and you will be surprised at the skills you will learn and the experiences you have along the way.

The family folklore activities included in this guide can be done at 4-H club meetings, at school, or at home. Some require the cooperative efforts of a group. Others are designed for individual work at home, close to the necessary materials and family members. Since sharing with a group is satisfying and motivating for everyone involved, it's important to create opportunities for informing others about individual projects. A group can work together by displaying a number of individual projects together. The advantage is that variety shows the nature of family folklore and how families are unique.

Family Folklore

A 4-H FOLK PATTERNS PROJECT

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NOTE: Accompanying this booklet is a set of activity sheets. Each of these activity sheets can be used to further explore information presented in one of the sections listed above, and each is coded to the particular section. For example, “Personal Treasure Keepsake Exhibit” is an activity on how to display objects that have become keepsakes in your family. The section in the booklet on “Family Keepsakes” (page 22) talks about the different kinds of things that become family keepsakes. Following is a list of accompanying activity sheets:

Collecting Family Folklore on Short-Item
Cards

Your Personal Timeline

More Story Starters

A Family Map

Hidden Stories in Your Family Photographs

Family History vs. Family Mystery (or How
to Label and Store Photographs)

Photographing Family Traditions

Family Customs Potluck Dinner

A Family Recipe

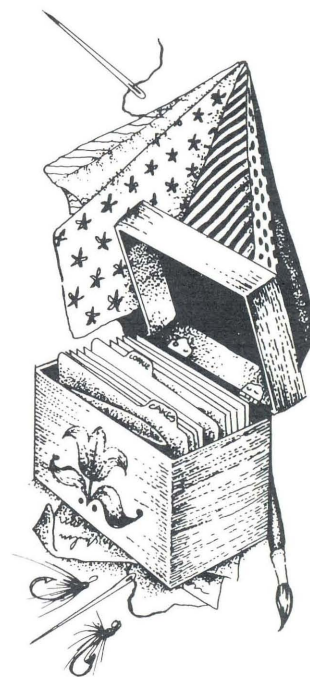
Demonstrate a Tradition

Personal Treasure Keepsake Exhibit

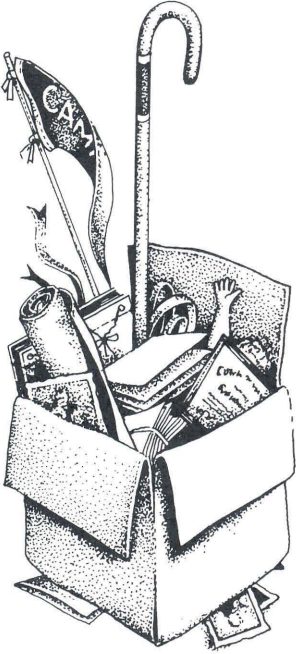
Family Treasure Hunt and Keepsake

Notebook

A Place for Everything and Everything in
Its Place



Introduction



Examples of Family Folklore Include . . .

- . . . how you got your name.
- . . . the way you all chuckle over certain family photos.
- . . . what you'll do at the birthday party tomorrow.
- . . . how you say good night to each other at bedtime.
- . . . the vampire face your cousin makes with the flashlight in the dark.
- . . . all the places you have lived.
- . . . those boxes of old papers, toys, baby things, and junk stored way up in the closet.
- . . . the way your dad barbecues ribs.
- . . . the stories your mom tells about Great-uncle Rodolfo.

FAMILY FOLKLORE IS
the way your family captures its experiences
and keeps its past alive.

Who Is in Your Family?

Your family includes:

- Your immediate family—parents, brothers and sisters, step-parents, and step-, half-, and adopted brothers and sisters.
- Your larger family—aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, nieces and nephews, and other relatives.

Others may be part of your family too. Don't overlook:

- The friend of the family you call "Uncle Henry," even though he's not really your uncle.
- Your babysitter and the people in that home.
- The people you live with.
- The friends and neighbors who join you for holidays and vacations.
- An exchange student.
- Anyone at all who feels like family to you.

Keep this definition of family in mind throughout your adventures in family folklore.

Family Folklore Goals

The goals of a 4-H FOLKPATTERNS family folklore project are to develop:

- Knowledge about what family folklore is and why it is important.
- Understanding and interest in the diverse ways in which families preserve the past.
- Understanding of yourself, your family, and your family folklore.
- Interest and skills in collecting and preserving family folklore.
- Positive attitudes toward the process of creating and collecting family folklore as something essential, meaningful, and enjoyable.
- Appreciation for the uniqueness of families and family heritage.
- A sense of the human life cycle and how family members experience it.

Family Folklore Is Different from Genealogy

Genealogy usually refers to preparing a family tree or knowing the name of your ancestors and the dates during which they lived. Family folklore goes beyond this by looking at the stories and traditions of both new and old family members. Genealogy knowledge is useful for understanding who your family members are and for appreciating those family stories and traditions.

For example, a document proving that Martin's Great-great-grandma Esther settled in Michigan in 1890 is indeed interesting. But to a family folklorist, the story Martin's family tells of Grandma Esther's pies would be far more interesting:

Grandma Esther cut a design she called "flying geese" into the crust of each pie she made. You see, geese meant something wild and wonderful to her. She loved the sound of geese honking and would run outdoors to catch a glimpse of them in flight.

This family tradition lives on today. The pie makers in Martin's family decorate their pie crusts too, and they especially savor the sight and sounds of geese in flight, just like their Esther did so long ago.

Family folklore means looking beyond facts and dates to the effects family stories and traditions have on people today.

Seven Convincing Reasons for Exploring Family Folklore

1. It's fun.
2. It's all around you. Family folklore is being created and passed down right this minute wherever families live on earth.



-
3. Your family's folklore is unique. No other family is quite like yours, so explore it.
 4. Knowing your family's folklore means you have roots. You'll discover the bonds of a common past.
 5. If you like to investigate or snoop, it will satisfy your curiosity about who you are and how you got to be that way.
 6. Only people create folklore. The ability to preserve the past is one characteristic that distinguishes humankind from all other animal life.
 7. It's up to you! Each generation creates its own folklore and traditions. Some traditions cease to exist as new ones replace them. What traditions will you start in your lifetime?

STOP!

Did you know that many 4-H FOLKPATTERNS projects involve some of the things folklorists and historians do? This is your chance to try doing what they do.

Folklorists work like news reporters in some ways. They observe, interview, photograph, describe, document, and report the lives of people. They preserve the past. But there's a big difference. The people folklorists report about aren't necessarily famous or influential like those in newspapers. Instead, they are tradition-bearers—everyday, common people whose lives offer a richness that is often overlooked.

Folklorists try to answer questions about people such as: How did they learn to do the things they do? What ways of life have been passed down to them through the generations? Like detectives, folklorists use clues to piece together a picture of traditions over time.

Historians also are detectives who piece together a picture of the past. They find their clues in archives, family photograph albums, courthouses, libraries, and the people around them.

Why Become a Folklorist?

Since you are a part of your family, you're a natural born expert! You have the advantage of knowing your family better than anyone, because you are within it. You are a part of a unique group of people—your own family!

Why Become a Historian?

You are curious about why your world is like it is and you want to be able to contribute to the piecing together of the past!

An Inspiring Story

Did you know that Alex Haley, author of the famous book and television series, *Roots*, began searching for his past because of the stories his family told about the African? With just these tales, Mr. Haley began his long project to discover his family background and to know about his people of long ago. Eventually, he uncovered his story through oral history (evidence and stories told to him), genealogy (official records and his family tree), and family folklore. Like an ace detective, Mr. Haley used all clues. Anyone familiar with *Roots* can imagine the sense of accomplishment Mr. Haley must feel knowing about himself and his past!

The Forms of Family Folklore

You have just read about some of the ways in which your family preserves its past. These are called forms of family folklore. Each form can be a magical journey from the here-and-now to the there-and-then. We create folklore around important and meaningful times in our lives. The forms of folklore allow us to communicate and understand them.

Yet, each form tells us only **one** part of a family's past. For example, Jeanette's family photo album tells us when her family took pictures—mostly on special occasions. But it tells nothing about the time she accidentally ran the bath water over the sides of the bathtub. No one would have taken a picture that day—everyone was running for mops, sponges, and buckets! It was not amusing to Jeanette or anyone else at the time, so who would have wanted a picture? Instead, the bathtub incident lives on as a story told by everyone in the family.

Remember, just as a detective considers all possible clues, the family folklorist must consider the **variety of ways** a family uses to preserve its past.

This booklet is about the forms of family folklore: stories, expressions, photographs, customs, and keepsakes. The activities will help you learn about these forms and how they are important in your own family.

Plan a Family Get-Together: Why wait until your family happens to get together with aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents? Help to plan the next get-together yourself. It's a guaranteed way to be able to collect your family folklore. Think of doing things that will spark memories like bringing out the photo album or showing home movies, playing games, making homemade ice cream, showing family keepsakes . . . then get ready to collect more family stories and join in family customs!

How to Use This Guide

This guide is arranged in sections by types of family folklore: expressions, stories, photography, customs, and keepsakes.

Start by reading and doing the activities up to the section on stories on page 13. At that point, you will have learned some of the basics of family folklore. Then you may choose the next section to tackle. Will it be keepsakes? Or customs? Or photography? You decide what interests you most about your own family. Feel free to skip around, but do read each section completely. Or, you may follow the usual beginning-to-end approach with this guide. And don't pass up the opportunity to complete the activities. They can provide you with lots of good information!

Note to group leader: Read the instructions for each activity before the meeting. You may need to gather a few materials or make copies of the activity sheets.

A "What Else?" section appears at the end of most activities. This section provides ideas to take you a step further after you have completed the basic activity. It includes ideas that could be made into school, club, or fair projects. However, you may do many of the "What Else?" activities at any time, whether or not you have completed the basic activity. Be creative in considering the possibilities of each activity. Let your imagination lead you where it will.

For more information on photographing folk traditions, interviewing and notetaking, tape recording an interview, transcribing a tape-recorded interview, and storing collected materials, refer to 4-H 1222, *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide*. If you want an idea of what skills you will need and how much time is required for more involved or advanced projects, refer to pages 8-10 of the leader's guide.

No matter which 4-H FOLKPATTERNS family folklore project you choose, be sure to tell your county 4-H staff about it so they can let the staff at the 4-H FOLKPATTERNS office at the Michigan State University Museum know how you're doing.



Family Folklore Card Game

- PURPOSE:** To learn what family folklore is
- YOU'LL NEED:** 2 to 10 players
32 index cards (3- by 5-inch) or small pieces of paper
Pen, pencil, or typewriter
- TIME:** 20-60 minutes
- HOW TO DO IT:** Print or type each of the following questions on the cards. Place the completed cards face down in a pile in the middle of a table. The first player picks a card and chooses a second player to answer the question on the card. After answering the question, the second player picks a card to ask a third player. This continues until all the questions have been answered. This game has no right or wrong answers, and there are no winners or losers. After some of the answers are given, let others share their answers to the same question. By sharing answers to questions, the players will see that there are many similarities in the ways in which other families traditionally behave.

Questions

- What music, songs, or musical instruments does your family enjoy?
- How did your parents meet and get married?
- Do you own anything that is not worth much money, yet it is a prized possession you plan to keep “forever”?
- Think of a holiday and the foods your family prepares for it. What one food would your family be sure to include in the celebration?
- Is there anything that has been passed down through the generations in your family? Tell its story. (This could be an object or a tradition.)
- Did you have any beliefs or fears when you were very young that you no longer believe or fear?
- Describe your favorite family photograph.
- Can you recall the funniest mistake or worst accident that has happened in your kitchen?
- Where do you keep your personal treasures?
- How did your family celebrate a recent holiday or special occasion?
- Describe a favorite costume or dress-up outfit you have worn.
- Have you ever bought or collected a souvenir?
- Is there an activity your family does each year in the spring, summer, fall, or winter?
- What do you do to get well when you have a cold?
- What special privileges does the birthday person in your family have on his or her birthday?
- Is there a food your family prepares that others consider mouthwatering?
- Can you think of a practical joke or prank that you have pulled or that has been pulled on you?
- What does your family do for fun on the weekend? On a long ride?

-
-
- What did you do with your baby teeth when they came out?
 - Do you know the story of your name or nickname?
 - Have you been to a family reunion, wedding, or anniversary party? How did you celebrate?
 - Has your family saved any of your baby things such as toys, clothes, or identification bracelets?
 - Can you tell any of the stories you've heard your family tell again and again?
 - Does anyone in your family make faces or use gestures when they talk or at other times?
 - What is your favorite holiday and how does your family celebrate it?
 - Can you name all the places you have lived since you were born?
 - What do you remember about bedtime when you were very young?
 - Were there any rules in your home that you couldn't break?
 - How did your grandparents earn a living?
 - Has your family had any unusual good or bad luck?
 - Tell about a "first" for you—your first time to sleep over with a friend, first pet, first travel alone, first food you learned to cook, etc.
 - Is there an evil or strange character in your family? Who is it and why?

WHAT ELSE?

Can you add more questions to this list? Try playing this game at a family event.

This game has been adapted from the Feeling Good game developed by Gloria Jeanne Itman Blum and Barry Blum, 507 Palma Way, Mill Valley, California, 1977.

Family Profile



- PURPOSE:** To record important information about your family
- YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil
- TIME:** 60-90 minutes
- HOW TO DO IT:** Read through the items of the "Family Profile." Write down information from your point of view or ask family members for their ideas. Use additional paper if you need more space.

Family Profile

Date _____

	Family Members	Nicknames	Birthdate
You—	1. _____	_____	_____
	2. _____	_____	_____
	3. _____	_____	_____
	4. _____	_____	_____
	5. _____	_____	_____
	6. _____	_____	_____
	7. _____	_____	_____
	8. _____	_____	_____

My Favorites

Places to go or visit _____	Games _____
Places to vacation _____	Sports _____
Weekend activity _____	Crafts _____
Summer activity _____	Music _____
Fall activity _____	Singer or musician _____
Winter activity _____	Songs _____
Spring activity _____	Movies _____
Holiday _____	Books _____
Family celebration _____	Stories _____
Keepsakes or treasures _____	Magazines _____
4-H activity _____	Television programs _____
Hobbies _____	Foods _____

Snacks _____ Jokes _____
Animals _____ Pranks _____
Trees _____ Other _____
Flowers _____ _____
Colors _____ _____

WHAT ELSE?

Try asking each of your family members about their list of favorites.

Family Folklore Checklist



- PURPOSE:** To identify some of the ways your family keeps its past alive
- YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil
- TIME:** 10-15 minutes
- HOW TO DO IT:** This checklist includes many different ways families preserve the past. Each family uses some of these ways more than others, so some items on the checklist may not be as familiar to you as others. First read completely through the checklist. Then put a check next to the things your family does to preserve its past. If your family has other ways, write them in the space below.

Family Folklore Checklist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family photographs | <input type="checkbox"/> Keepsakes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family recipes | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singing or music | <input type="checkbox"/> Family expressions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday celebrations | <input type="checkbox"/> Family jokes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Childhood belongings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scrapbook | <input type="checkbox"/> Meal time traditions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family stories | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Souvenirs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> Home furnishings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needlework | <input type="checkbox"/> Dancing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quilts | <input type="checkbox"/> Tape recordings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters | <input type="checkbox"/> Book making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family reunions | <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occupations | <input type="checkbox"/> Greeting cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family traditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School mementos | <input type="checkbox"/> Something passed down from another generation |

Other: _____

Family Expressions



S

OME EXPERIENCES live on as family sayings or expressions. Following is an example of how families preserve the past in expressions:

The Magic \$50 Bill

My great uncle was called “Uncle Duck.” He was always known as a cheapskate. Whenever it came time for a group to divide up costs and for him to pay his share, he would take a \$50 bill out of his wallet. This was in the 1920s, so no one could make change for the \$50. He’d put it away, and that was that. So now, whenever anyone doesn’t pay his or her share, we say, “She pulled an Uncle Duck,” or “Don’t pull an Uncle Duck.”

—Walter Tucker, age 36
Ypsilanti, Michigan

To anyone outside of the family, the meaning of this expression is not immediately clear. A dictionary doesn’t define “She pulled an Uncle Duck on us.” An outsider needs a family member or an insider to translate. The insider can tell how the expression came into being because it really is a shortened version of a longer story. The insider can also explain how the family uses the expression now. Only with this information can an outsider understand the expression.

Have you had the experience of hearing a family expression or joke you didn’t understand? Have you ever had to explain one of your family expressions? It happens often when people from different families come in contact and get to know each other’s pasts.

Like family stories, some expressions were coined in the distant past, and the family members who use these expressions today were not present at these occasions. Other expressions are being created by families right now. A child has trouble pronouncing someone’s name, so a nickname is born. Both old and new expressions show how creative families can be. It’s as if they invent and pass down a unique private language.

Beyond Words

This private family language often goes beyond the spoken word. Expressions include gestures like facial expressions, body movements, and sounds. Sometimes gestures illustrate a story or expression. At other times, the gestures are center stage, the story itself. Here’s an example:

It was Thanksgiving morning and it was my job to lace and tie up the stuffed turkey. But I’d never done it before. So I was studying a cookbook diagram, trying to figure it out. I was bending my own arms and hands as if they were the wings when a friend saw me in this ridiculous position. The “turkey pose” stuck! Throughout the weekend we laughed about it. We even did the “turkey pose” for photographs!

—Walter Tucker, age 36
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Why Family Expressions Are Important

Family expressions function in many ways in the family. They help us to playfully tease, to appreciate the humor in our lives, and to comment about behavior or try to correct it. They allow us to feel the ties of a past we share.

Think about what a family does when it takes in a new member. As people marry, remarry, adopt, or make close friends, the family teaches its ways to the newcomer. Often it does this by helping the person to catch up on important family folklore such as stories and expressions. Of course, this process of bringing someone into the family circle takes time. It is a special way in which people share their lives and grow closer.

Accompanying Activity Sheets:

The Family Name Game
Collecting Family Folklore on Short-Item Cards



The Family Name Game

PURPOSE: To record some of your family names and expressions for things; to discover your family's private language

YOU'LL NEED: Pen or pencil

TIME: Varies

HOW TO DO IT: Write the names or expressions your family has used (when you were younger) or uses now for these categories. **WARNING:** You may need extra sheets of paper. One family who did this activity came up with over 40 names they call their cat!

PEOPLE
(nicknames)

PETS
(nicknames)

PLACES
(rooms, community places)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

FOOD
(meals, snacks, dishes)

ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS
(eating, working, playing)

THINGS
(tools, toys, clothes)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

OTHER SITUATIONS/OCCASIONS

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

WHAT ELSE?

1. Write a family dictionary of your family's private language.
2. Make a list of expressions you associate with particular family members.

Family Stories



F

AMILY STORIES are the stories your family tells about its members. Even though some of the tales are told over and over again, no one seems to tire of hearing or telling them. Some family stories began as experiences people had generations ago—things that happened to your distant relatives. Those stories (for instance, about coming to America) might seem far away and as if they should begin, “Once upon a time . . .” Your family also tells other stories that grew out of things that happened to you last week or last year. Retelling the story of the April Fools’ Day prank you pulled probably seems less exotic than the story of Aunt Rosa arriving in America, but it seems more real to you.

Both old and new stories are important parts of your family folklore. As a family folklorist, you must dedicate yourself not to one or the other, but to learning about both.

Accompanying Activity Sheets:

Story Starters—Stories about Myself

Your Personal Timeline

More Story Starters

A Family Map

About Storytelling

Storytelling takes place when the family has time for it: lazy days, wintry evenings, dinner time, family reunions, holiday celebrations, or long car rides. At the beginning, a story is only a person’s interesting experience. Then the magic begins. The family storyteller turns the experience into a story by exaggerating, simplifying, embellishing, or stripping it of its controversy or conflict. This transformation of the original experience into a story is similar to the process of stone polishing. Family stories have the rough edges smoothed off, and what remains are meaningful gems for the family. Telling and hearing these stories helps the members of a family feel good about themselves and their ability to face life’s challenges.





The Even Dozen

Each family is unique, yet one family's stories can sound quite like another's. Many family stories are about the "Even Dozen":

1. Mishaps and disasters—Some events are just made for the storyteller, like dropping the Thanksgiving turkey, getting covered with mud, or anything else just awful enough to make a great story!

2. Courtship—What could be more entertaining than stories of how couples meet, fall in love, and marry?

3. Characters—People become distinctive by what they do. You expect certain behavior from a character. For instance, Donald Duck wouldn't be himself without losing his famous temper. The behavior of certain family members often becomes their trademark.

4. Heroes—People who show courage and do heroic deeds of all kinds, from helping others to defending their beliefs, become the center of family stories.

5. Not-so-good guys—People who don't play by the rules (like horse rustlers, rum runners, rogues, rounders, renegades, and rats) naturally make for interesting stories. It seems like every family has one of these "not-so-good" members.

6. The supernatural and the unexplainable—Serious stories about life's mysteries, ghosts, and U.F.O.s scare us just enough.

7. Stories for children—Original and semi-original stories are created to tell children in bedtime episodes. Sometimes familiar fairy tales are altered to include the child or other real life details.

8. Lost fortunes—Many stories revolve around passing up the chance of a lifetime, losing the flip of a coin, or missing a golden opportunity. "It would all be different now if only . . ."

9. Pranks, mischief, and humor—People are naturally curious, adventurous, fun-loving, and ready to giggle.

10. Survivors—Many stories involve overcoming hardships, taking risks, being lucky, and living to tell about it. Sometimes survival isn't truly a matter of life and death; it's just outsmarting someone or coming out ahead and having the last laugh.

11. Migration—Coming to America and adapting to a new way of life is a popular story theme.

12. Turning points—Things are never the same after a turning point. Events (like natural disasters), situations (like meeting the new boss), and choices (like moving) can all be turning points.

Story Starters—Stories about Myself

- PURPOSE:** To record family stories about yourself
- YOU'LL NEED:** Writing paper
Pen or pencil
Tape recorder and blank tapes (optional)
A partner
- TIME:** Varies
- HOW TO DO IT:**
1. Read through the five sections:
 - My Life as a Baby
 - My Life as a Little One
 - My Life as a Student
 - My Life as a Young Person
 - My Life as I Enter Adulthood
 2. Choose one or more story starters.
 3. You have three options:

Option #1: Tell the stories of your choice to someone. Then switch roles. Give your partner a chance to tell his or her stories while you listen.

Option #2: Write down the stories of your choice. Remember, things that are written down can be read and reread. They are easy to share and they last, so it's worth the effort. Be the author of *The Stories of My Life!*

Option #3: Tape record the stories of your choice. To learn how to tape an interview, refer to pages 25-26 of 4-H 1222, *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide*.
 4. Hint: your family can help you with this activity. Stories about you as a baby or as a little one may be news to you!

MY LIFE AS A BABY

Where I was born—city, hospital, etc. _____	The kind of baby I was _____
_____	What I liked to do _____
Getting my mother and me to the hospital (before I was born) _____	My first words _____
_____	My favorite toys or games _____



How they got me to eat, sleep, or stop crying _____

How my name was chosen _____

Funny things I did _____

MY LIFE AS A LITTLE ONE

My first playmates _____

Things I feared or believed _____

My favorite toys, games, or things to do _____

My first pet _____

Mischief I got into _____

My favorite foods _____

MY LIFE AS A STUDENT

My first day at school _____

What I did at recess _____

Best friends _____

Favorite year in school _____

Favorite teacher _____

Favorite afterschool snack _____

Fun times _____

Pranks or tricks _____

Field trips _____

MY LIFE AS A YOUNG PERSON

Learning to do things like ride a bike or skate _____

A lesson I learned the hard way _____

Something else comes to mind: _____

Other firsts like walking, singing, etc. _____

More funny things I did _____

Something else comes to mind: _____

Sports and games _____

School plays or programs _____

School picnics or parties _____

Favorite subject _____

Worst subject _____

Favorite book _____

Something else comes to mind: _____

Sleeping over with friends _____

Summer camp _____

Camping out _____

Getting lost _____	An embarrassing moment _____
Being away from home _____	A time I was brave _____
The greatest day _____	4-H clubs _____
A surprise _____	Secrets and secret codes _____
Good luck _____	Pacts, dares, lies _____
Bad luck _____	Still more funny things I did _____
The hardest thing for me to do _____	Something else comes to mind: _____
The time I was most afraid _____	_____
The time I felt so proud _____	_____

MY LIFE AS I ENTER ADULTHOOD

Falling in love _____	Moving to a new house _____
Getting my first job _____	Meeting a new neighbor _____
Learning to drive _____	Joining a new club or church _____
Taking a trip _____	Redecorating my home _____
Cooking a meal _____	Having children _____
Leaving home _____	

WHAT ELSE?

1. Reading through these story starters has probably stirred up some memories. It's a good idea to jot down a few words about these memories now. Write in the spaces beside each one. Later, you can return to your notes and record the whole story.
2. Tell, write, or tape record more of these story starters. How about all of them?
3. Use these story starters to encourage others to tell you their stories. Start with friends, parents, grandparents, or neighbors.
4. Illustrate your stories with photographs, drawings, or real objects that are related to the story.
5. Learn about your early years. Recruit your family to help. Dig out baby clothes, baby books, photographs, etc.
6. Check the activity sheet "More Story Starters" for more ideas.





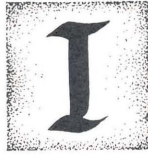
**Accompanying Activity
Sheets:**

*Hidden Stories in Your Family
Photographs*
*Family History vs. Family
Mystery*
*Photographing Family
Traditions*

Family Photography

Have you ever . . .

- . . . said “cheese” as someone took your picture?
- . . . felt a million miles away while looking at photographs of your great-grandparents?
- . . . dragged out the photo album or boxes of photos to amuse yourself?
- . . . wished you knew more about the people in the older photographs?
- . . . posed in front of some famous landmark?
- . . . done something silly while you were being photographed?



IF YOUR ANSWER to any of these is “yes,” then you are part of a great American tradition—family photography. Family photography is a very popular way that families use to preserve the past. A celebration just isn’t complete until the camera clicks away and everyone present has been frozen on film. Leafing through the family photo album or pouring over a box of jumbled photos has become an enjoyable family tradition for countless families.

“We have a picture a lot like that one”

It’s interesting to think about which parts of the past families choose to capture and preserve through photography. Shots of everyday routines like walking to school, cooking dinner, or stopping at the gas station are hard to find. Obviously, people spend much more of their lives doing these things than celebrating birthdays. But what they usually photograph is themselves looking their Sunday best on special days, doing things they’re used to seeing people do in photographs!

As you study your own family photos, think about both what you see **and** what you don’t see. What kinds of days were special enough for picture-taking in your family?

Family Photography Fun

Following are some activity ideas for family photography fans. Use these in addition to the activity sheets included in this packet.

1. Years Ago on This Day—Prepare for an upcoming holiday or family celebration by gathering photos taken on that same occasion in previous years. When the big day comes, spend time with your family looking at the collection of photos. Discuss how things have changed for your family and how your celebrations have changed. You might want to recreate an earlier photo by posing the same way, just for fun.

2. A Picture Is Worth Some Words—It’s the year 2045. Imagine that your great-grandchildren are looking at your family photos, wondering about the people and the stories behind them. Why not do your descendents a favor and write down or tape record what you know about a few of your favorite photos? Include not only names and dates, but details of what the day was like. This should be simple for photographs of your lifetime. But don’t stop there . . .

3. Detective Duty—Sort your family photos into three groups: labeled, not labeled, and mystery photos (those you know little or nothing about). With your family’s help, label the unlabeled photographs by writing lightly on the backs in pencil in the space where the margin is located. Label slides by writing on the paper frame that holds the slide.

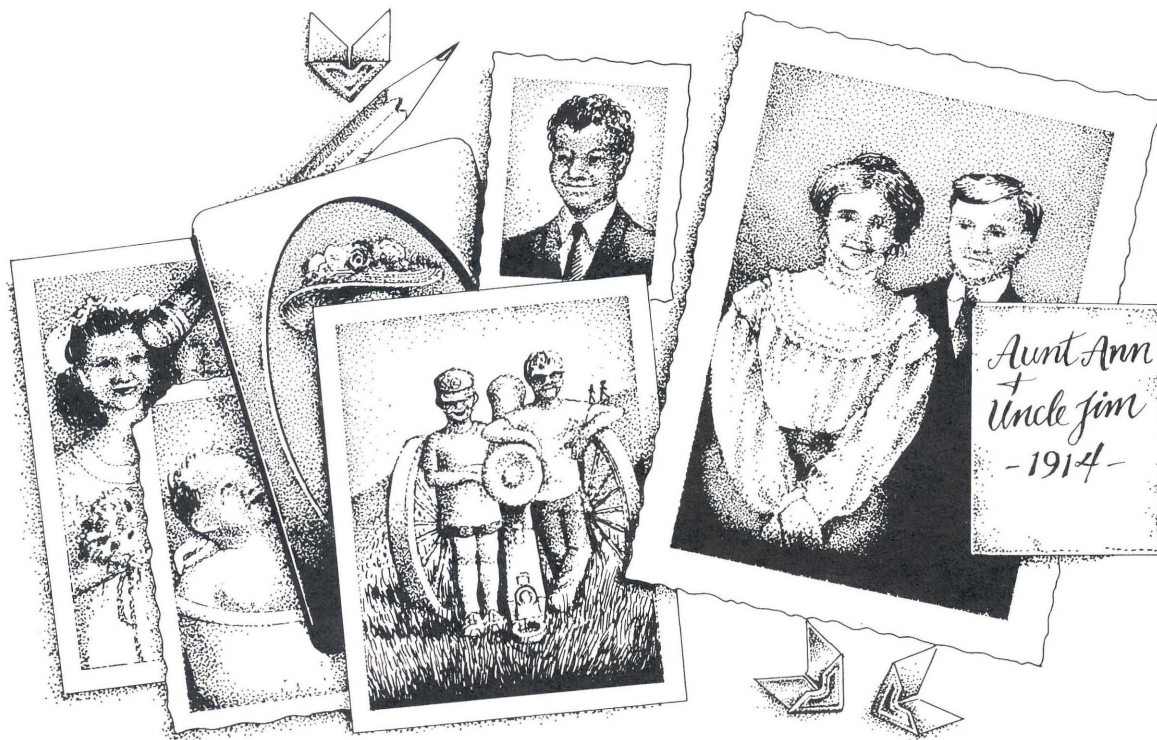
Maybe you'll be lucky enough not to have any mystery photos. In that case, give a pat on the back to your relatives who have kept the collection in such good order. If you do have a stack of mystery photos, you have a challenge ahead! Choose a few to make copies of on a photocopy machine. On a separate sheet, write down anything your family knows about the photo, plus any questions you have about it. Distribute the mystery photo along with your notes and questions to as many family members as possible. Do this in person or through the mail. Consider other friends and neighbors of the family who might have clues. Cross your fingers, share the results, and keep at it, Sherlock!

4. Get Clicking and Learn about Photography—Learn photography using the 4-H photography series booklets (4-H 1204 through 4-H 1211). These bulletins cover the basics of photography and more, from exploring your camera to making a movie.

Participate in other activities to sharpen your photography skills. Practice photographing people, places, and events. Learn to use a copy stand to make copies of photographs. Find a resource person in your community to teach you about the types of old photographs and their preservation and restoration. Tour a darkroom or photo processing laboratory. Refer to 4-H 1222, *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide*, to learn about labeling and organizing all types of photographs.

5. Participate in a 4-H FOLKPATTERNS Photo Opportunity. For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office.

6. Participate in the HISTOP Program—HISTOP stands for History Sharing Through Our Photographs. This program teaches the importance of photographs as historical documents. It is a way for young people and senior citizens to share in a variety of activities such as creative writing about history, making an exhibit of photos, and preserving family photos. For more information, write: HISTOP, 1910 Torquay, Royal Oak, Michigan 48073.

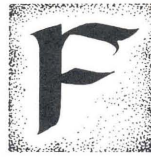




**Accompanying Activity
Sheets:**

*Family Customs Potluck
Dinner
A Family Recipe
Demonstrate a Tradition*

Family Customs



FAMILY CUSTOMS or traditions are activities the family repeats. Much of home life is ritualized because people do things in the same way again and again. The order of a morning routine, who does which chore, and how clothes are folded are examples of ritualized activities. These are examples of family customs:

- Taking a trip to the apple orchard every fall
- Disguising gift packages by putting stones inside or choosing oddly shaped containers
- Dinner time at your house—how the table is set, who serves the food, rules of the table, and what happens before, during, and after the meal

Not many people look forward to taking out the garbage or would consider it to be a family tradition, but it is. What makes this activity a family tradition? It may be the way chores are learned, the attitudes toward them, or the way chores are assigned. One family, for example, takes the drudgery out of chores by putting on music, setting a timer, and playing “Beat the Clock”! It just wouldn’t feel right any other way, and that is what makes it a family tradition for them.

From simple traditions to elaborate ones, each family has a unique heritage and style. Some traditions are based on religious beliefs and are carried out on holidays like Easter or Chanukah. National holidays trigger customs too, like viewing fireworks each Fourth of July. Cooking Kung Pao chicken for Chinese New Year reflects a family’s cultural background and its foodways.

How are family customs tied to the calendar? Some families get a treat on payday, visit grandparents twice a month, share time with a parent, skate in January, play frisbee in August, and celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. Perhaps every two years, relatives from overseas may visit. Almost automatically, the families carry out these timely customs.

People often like the idea of family traditions because the traditions seem to guarantee that family members will set aside time together. And people often cherish the memories and feelings about each other that these times provide. Such shared experiences and memories, whether pleasant or unpleasant, help foster a feeling of belonging to that family.

Some families create nonsense or invented family traditions all their own. On a whim, they declare a holiday, name it, prepare special foods, do something for fun, and then celebrate it every year. Have you heard of unbirthdays? Or Caper Bush Day? Or the Full Pink Moon Night? These holidays truly exist and are genuinely celebrated in some families! Why not?

Do traditions last forever? No, new ones replace some old ones as families change. The family used to making snowmen together will have to start a new tradition when they move to Texas. In fact, moving has become so common for Americans that some families even have moving day traditions. They create new customs of what gets packed last and unpacked first (the bicycles), how they say goodbye (with a pizza party), and how they say hello to new neighbors (with an invitation to coffee)! Having these traditions gives them something familiar and comforting during a difficult time. This is an important reason families create and continue their traditions.

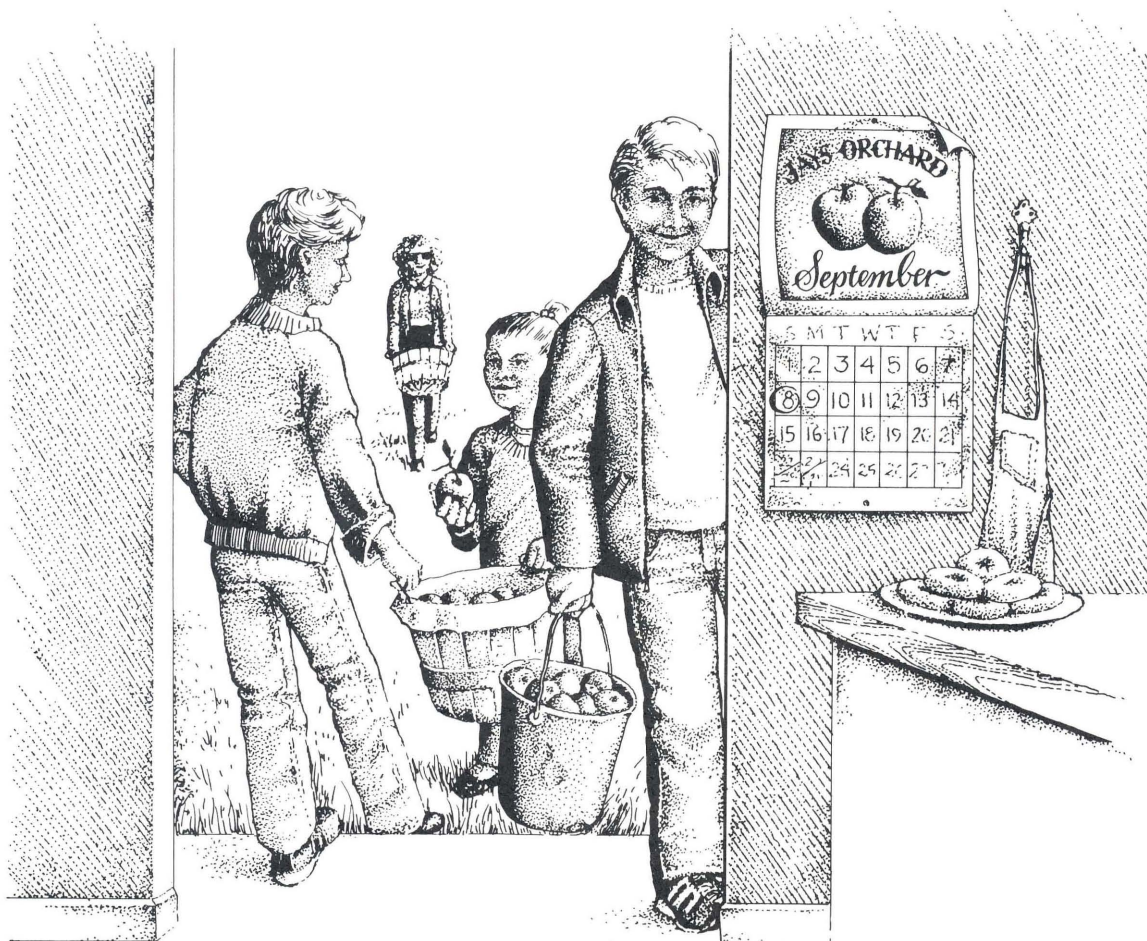
WHAT ELSE?

1. Talk about family customs with your larger family and other people. Use the Family Customs Profile from the “Family Customs Potluck Dinner” activity as a guide for interviewing them about their traditions.

2. On a holiday or birthday, have a countdown of what your family has done on that day over the years. Start with last year and work backward: two years ago on this day, three years ago, etc. Plug in your tape recorder or take notes as everyone tries to remember details. See how many years back you can remember together. Hint: The photo album might help.

3. **Make a birthday tape recording** on someone's birthday. You might want to include the story of the day of the person's birth; a birthday song or cheer; each guest saying his or her name, how long he or she has known the birthday person, and how they met; and the birthday person telling about this birthday in progress, this year of his or her life, or plans and hopes for the next year.

4. **Make a family cookbook or recipe calendar** to give to friends and family. Use your family's historical, original, or favorite recipes.





Accompanying Activity Sheets:

Keepsakes Profile

Personal Treasure Keepsake Exhibit

Family Treasure Hunt and Keepsake Notebook

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place

Family Keepsakes



IF PEOPLE weren't sentimental, or proud of their families, or dedicated to preserving the past, there would be absolutely no:

- **Keepsakes:** anything people keep or give to someone else to keep
- **Heirlooms:** any family possession passed down from generation to generation
- **Souvenirs:** something kept or given for remembrance
- **Personal treasures:** anything liked too much to give or throw away

Can you imagine life without your junk drawer, your great-grandma's locket watch, your Mackinac Island T-shirt, or the tiny flag your pen pal sent? Don't worry about it. If you are attached to your treasures, you're like people everywhere who preserve the past through their possessions.

The Nature of Family Keepsakes

Some typical things families save besides photographs are possessions of family members who have passed away, documents and papers, and functional things like tools and household furnishings. Other keepsakes are not so typical, like a vial of soil from an ancestral homesite.

Occasionally these treasures have historical value, like a diary kept by a relative who was a lumberjack during Michigan's white pine era. Some heirlooms are antiques and are worth money in addition to their sentimental value. (This isn't why they are called heirlooms. An heirloom is *any* family possession passed down from generation to generation.) Family work and crafts traditions are evident in items such as recipe books used in a family bakery and in needlework pictures.

Objects can bring a flood of memories. Having Mother's ring holder on the kitchen sink windowsill takes its owner back in time to where it used to sit in her childhood home. Family stories and values are taught through objects too. An original Mother's Day poem reminds one woman of the love her children showed once when gifts weren't affordable. All possessions, whether recent, tattered, or ordinary, are treasures in their owner's eyes because they give a feeling of home and family.

What Are Your Family Keepsakes?

Remember that anything imaginable can be a family keepsake, so long as it is meaningful to its owner.

To find out which family keepsakes are most important to you, ask yourself:

- If my family and I were going to be away from home for a year, what special things besides my personal possessions would I miss most?
- If I could take along five items to prevent homesickness, what would I choose?

Time Will Tell

Some of your personal possessions may become family treasures for future generations. Will it be your baseball card collection? The first letter you ever wrote to your parents? The wooden boat you whittled? Or this very booklet and the activities you've completed in it?

Keepsakes Profile

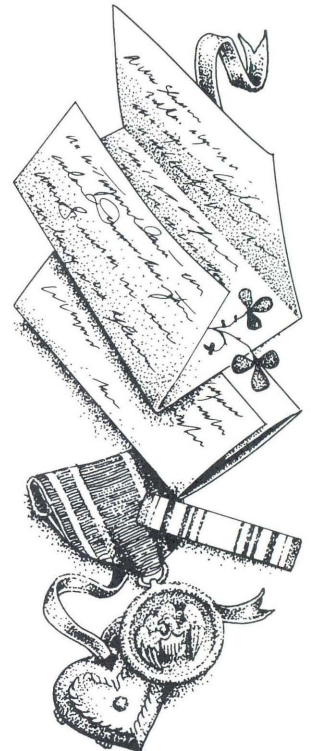
- PURPOSE:** To identify your keepsakes and to learn how they are important in preserving your past
- YOU'LL NEED:** Pen or pencil
- TIME:** Varies
- HOW TO DO IT:** Read through the following items. They include many different ways individuals use to preserve the past. Check the items relevant to your life.

Keepsakes Profile

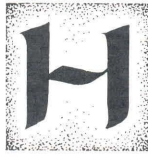
- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> artwork | <input type="checkbox"/> school programs | <input type="checkbox"/> crafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> portraits | <input type="checkbox"/> stamp collections | <input type="checkbox"/> needlework |
| <input type="checkbox"/> schoolwork | <input type="checkbox"/> baseball cards | <input type="checkbox"/> quilts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> report cards | <input type="checkbox"/> pressed flowers | <input type="checkbox"/> embroidery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> buttons | <input type="checkbox"/> furniture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> diplomas | <input type="checkbox"/> stickers | <input type="checkbox"/> decorations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> yearbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> pins | <input type="checkbox"/> gadgets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> autograph books | <input type="checkbox"/> I.D. cards | <input type="checkbox"/> knick-knacks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scrapbooks | <input type="checkbox"/> awards/trophies | <input type="checkbox"/> dishes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> newspaper clippings | <input type="checkbox"/> work-related objects | <input type="checkbox"/> silverware |
| <input type="checkbox"/> postcards | <input type="checkbox"/> wedding dress | <input type="checkbox"/> linens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> greeting cards | <input type="checkbox"/> wedding things | <input type="checkbox"/> trunks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> letters | <input type="checkbox"/> baby clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> hope chests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> diaries | <input type="checkbox"/> baby things | <input type="checkbox"/> jewelry box |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wedding announcements | <input type="checkbox"/> clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> music box |
| <input type="checkbox"/> birth announcements | <input type="checkbox"/> uniforms | <input type="checkbox"/> clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ticket stubs | <input type="checkbox"/> costumes | Something else comes to mind: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family tree | <input type="checkbox"/> school sweater or jacket | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family Bible | <input type="checkbox"/> jewelry | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> religious objects | <input type="checkbox"/> toys | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> documents | <input type="checkbox"/> books | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> birth certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> live plants | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> death certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> seeds | |

WHAT ELSE?

1. Describe the items on this list to your friends and family. Talk about why these particular items are important to you.
2. Make up a display of your personal treasures (see the "Personal Treasure Keepsake Exhibit" activity sheet).



Closing Thoughts



HAVE YOU completed the activities that accompany this booklet? Congratulations! But this is *not* the end. By now you have realized that family folklore is a part of your everyday life. As a member of a family, you'll continue to create and experience family folklore for the rest of your life! And you've learned some ways to collect and preserve it for yourself and future generations.

What else can a skilled family folklorist do? Try these for starters, then flex your imagination!

1. Dream up a project based on your favorite family folklore sections or activities. Do you yearn to know more about the times of your great-grandparents? You could do anything from research to crafts. The *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide* (4-H 1222) and the *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Activity Book* (4-H 1223) can help you plan your project.

2. Spread the word. Give family folklore presentations to groups. People are naturally interested in their families, but most haven't heard of family folklore. Use activities such as the "Family Folklore Card Game" or show a completed project as part of the presentation. The *Communications Made Easy Notebook* (4-H 1065) has many pointers for giving an effective presentation.

3. Get your extended family in the know. Focus a family gathering on family folklore or write a letter about your interest. Your family will want to share photographs for copying. Doing the "Keepsakes Profile" activity together would be one way to know who has what in the family. Have a "share-in" with the keepsakes so that younger family members can learn about them too.

4. Show family pride in the gifts you give. Make and give things that share your family's uniqueness. These could include bird feeders copied from the design your mom used way back when . . . or poetry, or something homemade from your kitchen, or anything that says "you"!

5. Plan a family get-together. Why wait until your family happens to get together with aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents? Help to plan the next get-together yourself. It's a guaranteed way to be able to collect your family folklore. Think of doing things that will bring back memories (like bringing out the photo album, showing home movies, playing games, making homemade ice cream, or showing family keepsakes). Then get ready to collect more family stories and join in family customs!

6. Write up a family story questionnaire. If your family is spread out so that you can't see each other regularly, write to them about your interest in collecting family stories. Ask specific questions like "What do you know about Grandpa's railroad days?" Keep the questionnaire short; about 5 to 10 questions is plenty. Encourage family members to answer in writing or to send a tape recording. Share the results with your group.



Suggestions for Further Reading

The following books will be of interest to both adults and young people. Included are activity books and collections of family folklore. Check for them at your local library or bookstore.

Activity Books:

Art from Many Hands: Multi-Cultural Art Projects for Home and School by Jo Miles Schuman. Published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981.

Kid's America by Steven Caney. Published by Workman Publishing Co., New York, 1978.

My Backyard History Book by David Weitzman. Published by Little, Brown, and Co., Toronto, 1975.

Old Glory, James Robertson, ed. Published by Warner Paperback Library, 1973.

Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring the American Past by David Weitzman. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976.

Collections of Family Folklore:

Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of the Upper Peninsula by Richard M. Dorson. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1952.

A Celebration of American Family Folklore: Tales and Traditions from the Smithsonian Collection by Steven Zeitlin, Amy Kotkin, and Holly Cutting Baker. Pantheon Books, New York, 1982.

Country Folklore: A Handbook for Student Collectors by Richard Tallman and Laura Tallman. Arkansas College Folklore Archive Publications, Batesville, Ark., 1978. (Order directly from publisher for \$3.95.)

The *Foxfire* Series, Eliot Wigginton, ed. Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, N.J.

The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction (2d ed.) by Jan Harold Bruvand. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1978.

The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field-Workers in Folklore and Oral History by Edward D. Ives. The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tenn., 1980.

What Was It Like When Your Grandparents Were Your Age? by Ann Cook, Marilyn Gittell, and Herb Mack. Pantheon Books, New York, 1976.

Additional Resources:

The 4-H FOLKPATTERNS office at the Folk Arts Division of the Michigan State University Museum provides numerous materials and resources, including a reference library and the 4-H FOLKPATTERNS newsletter. The staff of the Folk Arts Division can also help you with questions you might have or direct you to other resources.

Through your county Cooperative Extension Service office, you will also find the following materials available:

- 4-H FOLKPATTERNS traveling exhibit (must reserve in advance)
- 4-H FOLKPATTERNS newsletters
- 4-H 1222, *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Leader's Guide*
- 4-H 1223, *4-H FOLKPATTERNS Activity Book*
- 4-H 1279, *Heritage Gardening—Vegetables*
- 4-H 1329, *Foodways: A 4-H FOLKPATTERNS Project*

The 4-H Project Resource Guide contains a listing of all 4-H materials. Consult it at your county Cooperative Extension Service for updated information on 4-H FOLKPATTERNS materials.

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1P-2M-8:85-CP-JRO Price \$3.00

