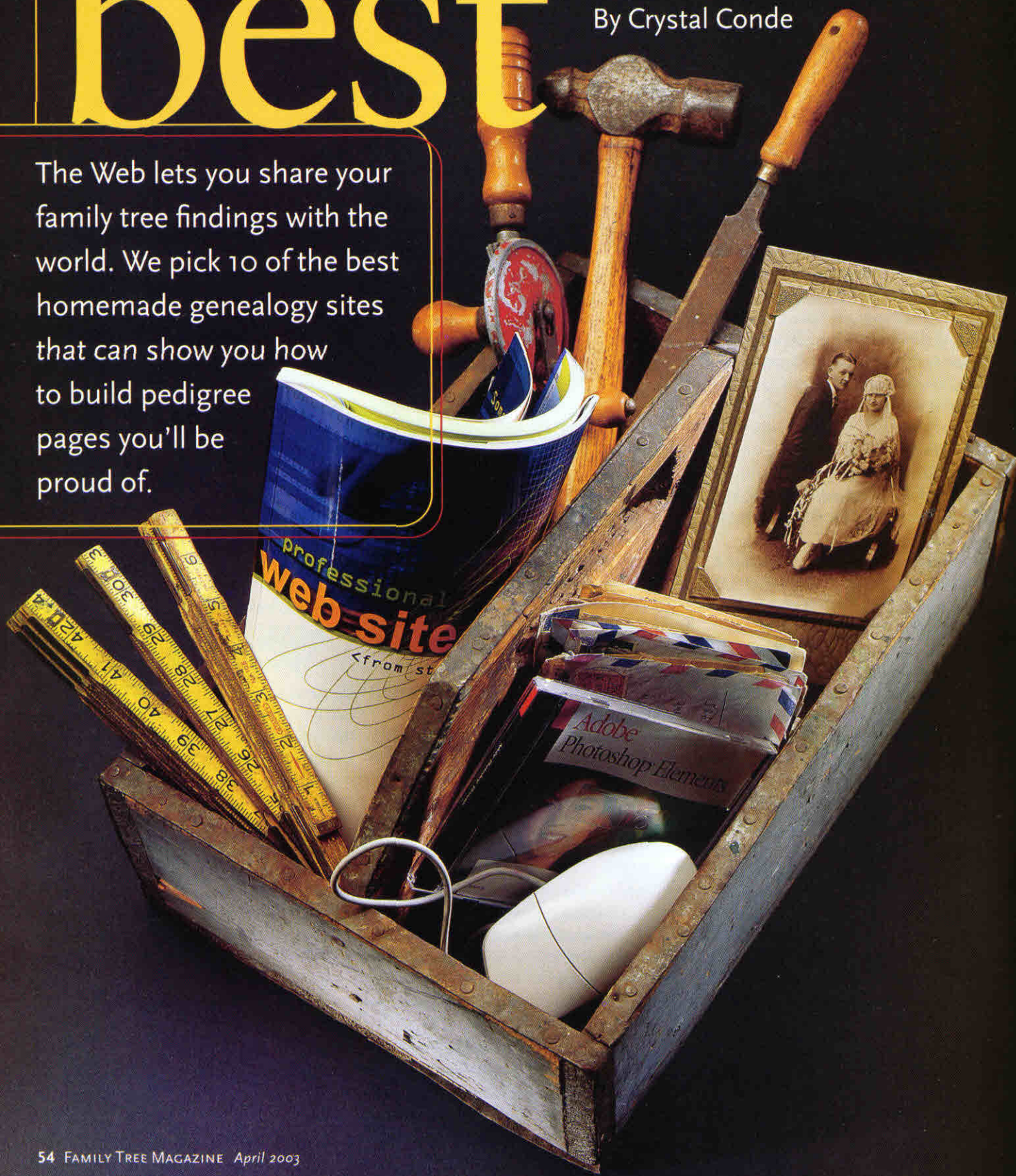


1 PERSONAL best

By Crystal Conde

The Web lets you share your family tree findings with the world. We pick 10 of the best homemade genealogy sites that can show you how to build pedigree pages you'll be proud of.



Before the Internet, sharing the fruits of all your hard genealogical work with relatives and fellow researchers meant lugging pedigree charts to family reunions, printing books, photocopying and even using something called a mimeograph. If you wanted to show your family tree to someone across the country, you needed plenty of postage stamps. Today, however, you can post pedigrees online for free, for others to access in the blink of a modem.

Personal genealogy pages have sprouted faster than you can Google for *Poindexter family history*. Homegrown sites have helped make genealogy the second-most-popular topic on the Web, behind only pornography.

But just like porn sites (presumably), there are good homemade genealogy sites and there are bad ones. Since bad sites make it harder for the rest of us to share the results of the creators' research, we thought we'd see what could be learned from the good personal genealogy Web sites. From the best sites, in fact—10 of them, selected by scouring the Web until our eyes ached and our mouse-clicking fingers cramped.

DIY dos and don'ts

As we searched for stellar family tree sites, we were reminded of some Web-design dos and don'ts. Whether you're planning your first site or remodeling an existing home on the Web, keep these tips in mind:

- **Do include a title** for your Web site, a **mission statement** or paragraph outlining the site's content, **links** to your main categories and **contact information**. If visitors know a little background about your research and what information you've made available from your family history findings, it piques their interest in browsing your site and gives them some direction in their search. They might discover you share a common ancestor! You also want visitors to be

able to contact you in case they too have research information about your family line. Including a link to your e-mail address on the home page and the subsequent pages seems to be the most common approach used by successful Webmasters.

- **Do organize your site** in an easy-to-navigate manner that will guide visitors rather than confuse them. **Clean, uncluttered page design** always works best. Provide a **link to the home page** on each page of your Web site, too. Remember that not every visitor will enter your site via the home page.

- **Do make sure your links work**. Personal Web sites are works in progress. Every link may not be active, but the ones that are should connect to the proper pages. Nothing frustrates Web surfers more than being unable to access the information they click on.

- **Don't design a circus**. Putting together a personal Web site allows you to be creative. The computer screen is your canvas. But refrain from posting **animated icons** and **musical sound bites** that play continuously. Sure, you want your genealogy Web site to stand out. You want visitors to recognize the hard work and creative thought you've put into each page. But sometimes less is more. A Scottish roots site can show ethnic pride without a plaid background that makes it impossible to read the text on top. If your home page has a Southern theme, a repeating rendition of "Dueling Banjos" will likely repel more visitors than it entertains. Dancing trees aren't a requirement for a visually appealing family site—they'll only detract from the family history data you're trying to showcase.

- **Do keep it simple**. Use **easy-to-read fonts** that stand out from your background. Curly or blocky typefaces are often hard to read, and italics should be used sparingly.

- **Do keep photographs small** to minimize download times; you can use thumbnails, linked to larger versions of the images, to efficiently present a gallery of pictures.

- **Don't overload your home page**, but make it a welcoming gateway to the rest of the information your site holds.

Finally, before your Web site goes "live," look at it on other computers. Appearance varies by browser (Netscape, Internet Explorer or AOL), operating system (Mac or PC) and monitor size. Just because you have the latest and greatest computer on the market and a cable modem doesn't mean your fellow family historians do. Keep those older computers and pokey dial-up connections in mind when designing your site.

The 10 personal genealogy Web sites featured here are the cream of the crop. Take some time to visit them. They might inspire you to clean up your existing family history site, or to put your own fascinating family story online.

AN AMERICAN ADVENTURE

<www.phillipsplace.net/genealogy>

An American Adventure is a good example of a themed Web site. It earns creativity points for its unusual title, as well. The Webmaster explains the theme up front on the home page:

"This is the story of ordinary people—farmers, grocers, coopers, tavern keepers, mail carriers, cabinetmakers—who loved their families and their country. You will find Revolutionary patriots, Gold Rush forty-niners and Civil War volunteers alongside mayors and school board members. Above all, the spirit of family shines through as these hardy souls sailed across the ocean to an unknown land and then moved steadily westward. Join me in celebrating their story."

The site displays good organization by dividing information into surname and location categories. Clicking on a place name in the Primary Locations category opens a page listing the people who lived there. Visitors can click on each person in the Primary Surnames category to learn the ancestor's spouse, children and birth and death dates. Primary Surnames offers details about the most well-researched ancestors; to access information on every surname featured on the Web site (not just the primary names), click the Everyname Index. If you've discovered a

An American Adventure
Sue Phillips

This is the story of ordinary people - farmers, grocers, coopers, tavern keepers, mail carriers, cabinet makers - who loved their families and their country. You will find Revolutionary patriots, Gold Rush Forty-niners, and Civil War volunteers alongside mayors and school board members. Above all, the spirit of family shines through as these hardy souls sailed across the ocean to an unknown land and then moved steadily westward. Join me in celebrating their story.

Primary Surnames
Aigler • Ames • Bachman • Beaghran • Bay • Bister • Brian • Cassidy • Cleveland
Cull • Flanders • Felt • Fendick • Evans • Evans • Gaud • Gray • Greenwood
Hart • Jarratt • Kumpf • Lynch • Mault • Mohrman • Myers • Miller • Moore
Morry • Moran • Mussen • Patterson • Peake • Phillips • Rasmussen • Ryke
Sillie • Simon • Stratton • Taylor • Welner • Wolff • Zedoff

Primary Locations
California • Sacramento • Colorado • Pueblo • Illinois • Henry
Indiana • Allen • Lagrange • Porter • Michigan • Branch • Elm
Ohio • Augleize • Knox • Licking • Stark • Tuscarawas
Pennsylvania • Berks • Schuylkill • Washington • York
Vermont • Rutland • Virginia • Augusta
Canada • Victoria, B.C. • England • Exke, Suffolk

Contact
Please contact me if you are researching these families or have information to add. I am sharing my information - and I encourage others to do likewise.

[Surnames](#) • [Everyname Index](#) • [Sources](#)

AN AMERICAN ADVENTURE

