

# My Five Best Discoveries at the New Family Discovery Center



Three of my children after a great day at the Family Discovery Center in downtown Salt Lake City.

Sometimes in life there are moments that take you by surprise. Sweet moments where you discover things not only about yourself, but about your family. I write this for anyone wondering how to get young people interested in genealogy and family history. All of this happened for me when my husband and I took our three youngest children to the newly-renovated [Family Discovery Center](#) located in the [Family History Center](#) on [Temple Square](#) in Salt Lake City. Family Discovery Centers and Family History Centers dot the United States and there are some out of the United States too. To find one near you, [click here](#).



My family checking out one of the exhibits at the center.

The place is pretty special in my view. There are seven different stations to be explored plus rows of computers to personally put into action things that may have piqued your interest at one of the stations. The thing I love about the center is the variety offered to explore your own family history. It was an amazing day for me because I got to peek into my children's hearts, not something a mom gets to do every day.

I've come up with a list of five of my own family discoveries that hit me while there with my children. Some of them seem pretty straightforward, things I already knew, but this experience cemented them in my mind for sure. Others were a major light bulb moment – a poignant memory I will savor for a long time.

[Related: Life is full of poignant moments](#)

# 1. Family History is about the dates...and the dash.

1. My husband is a facts man when it comes to family history and I'm a story gal, but as we perused the center, I came to the realization how both need a place at the table and space to develop. At the center we can learn how the dates shape our "dash" (referring to the dash between one's life dates on a grave marker.) There are centers to find out what happened in the world the year you were born and the year your children and grandparents were born. Much of what happens in our life is dependent on the

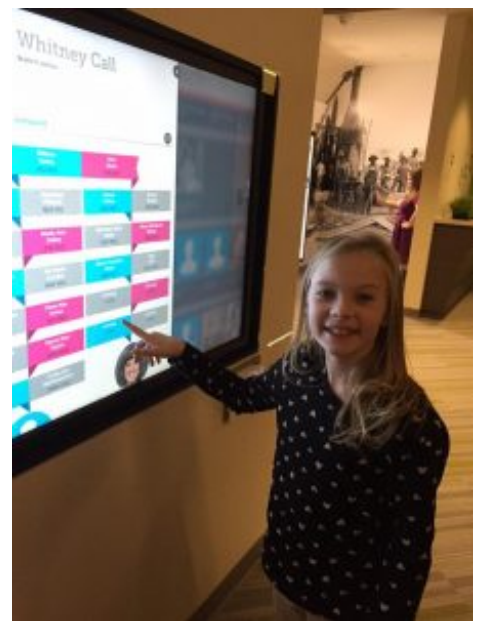


My daughter loved picking out countries and clothes at one of the exhibits.

conditions in which we enter the world. I have ancestors that fought and died in the Civil War. How would their lives have been different if they were born 20 years ago? So different. I love to think about how they lived

because of when they lived. It also makes me ask myself, “How am I living in the age of limitless access to knowledge and opportunity?” “How do I handle the age of no waiting?” I felt a prompt to live more fully in this amazing time I have been given, and appreciate my own dash.

## 2. Family history is places and clothing too.



My daughter found out she was related to some pretty cool people.

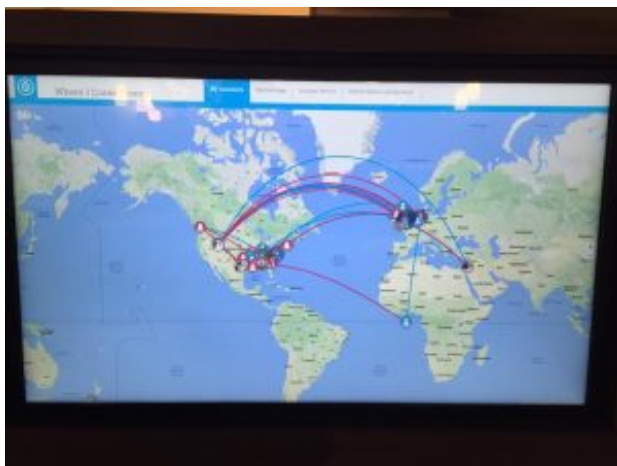
My two little girls, ages 10 and 5 shared this discovery with me. At one station you stand in front of a green screen and based on your information on [FamilySearch](#), it shows what percentage your heritage is. Based on that, you can choose a period costume that comes up on the screen and your face is inserted inside.

My girls could have spent the day there, seeing how they looked in different costumes from different countries in different places and times. A few steps away there is another green screen where you can choose any place in the world and when it comes up, you “stand” in front of a green screen, and you are there. Another spot that provided endless fun for them. They loved to see what the Sweden temple looked like, where their sister is currently serving an LDS mission. We also showed them places in Holland, where much of our ancestry is from, as well as Texas. It was an interactive tour of the world, all while in Salt Lake City, Utah. The technology behind these exhibits appeals to young explorers and sparks an interest in their own history. It did for my family.

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[Related: Pioneer Stories Help us to Work Harder, Be grateful.](#)

**3. I can learn so much about myself and my family in no time at all.**



A display of my ancestors all

over the world.

One of our favorite spots at the center is “My Time Machine.” The center lets you pick an ancestor and based on what information is listed on FamilySearch you can learn all the details of their life on a timeline as the picture changes to put in perspective what life may have been like for them. It is fascinating and humbling. My ten-year-old daughter, who is frightened of natural disasters, learned that many of her ancestors lived in Texas and survived tornadoes. This was kind of a game changer for her. I learned that my great-great grandmother buried multiple children over the span of 20 years. She was an accomplished woman and just kept going and staying strong despite her heartaches. She also buried two husbands and went through a divorce. I want to talk with her about all this someday. I learned all this within about a half hour – and wish I had been able to spend the entire day discovering them.

#### **4. Children’s giggles never get old in any setting.**

This is a sweet and simple discovery, no matter when it comes along. All three of my kids loved the “My famous relatives” station. There they could see what famous people they were related to, as well as pioneers, church leaders and several other categories. All three of my kids giggled, laughed and pointed when they found out they were related to some of the Studio C stars, some of their favorite people on earth. My son was also impressed he was related to John Wayne – one of his grandpa’s heroes, so of course it’s one of his! I still think of those giggles when I’m having a down moment.

#### **5. Listening to an interview**

**with your child is pure gold.**



My son't interview was the highlight of my day.

This was far and away THE BEST discovery of the day for me. Nestled in the back of the center are "interview rooms." Some are small for just one or two people, some are large enough for a whole family. When my 14-year-old son walked into a small one, I followed him in. My husband took the two girls into a bigger room. He sat down in the chair and followed the prompts as a bright and happy woman appeared on the screen to interview him. She started asking basic questions, the kind of questions I should be asking on the way home from school, but the ones I never quite get to. Questions like, "What do you like about yourself?" "What makes you happiest?" "What did you learn from something hard?" His answers amazed me. He only had about one minute to answer, which was good, because he was concise and clear in his responses. I tried to hide my emotion when he was asked to describe each family member in one word. His answers were so touching. I found out how much he loves

his family and how often he thinks of them in his daily life. His word for his missionary sister was "perfect." Wow. What a sweet brother! At this moment I realized how important it is to find each of my children's stories and my own. Life is precious. Life is tender. Find out the highs and lows and create some more in the time you have. The interview was recorded and sent to his email. I cherish it.

In short, I would say to make time to visit this center with your family if you live locally and if you don't, find one! The dates and the dash are the great stuff of life. I just need to remember every day, not just on those special discovery days. For locations and hours visit the [website](#). I was grateful for FamilySearch and RootsTech for inviting me. Now I am inviting you.

## **[Related: Interviewing Resources, Questions and Tips](#)**

In addition to visiting the Family Discovery Center, here are a few other ideas to get you in the pioneer spirit this week:

- Read some family pioneer stories or enjoy a book about them. There are a some Gerald Lund classics we love: *The Work and the Glory* series (traces a fictional family all the way across the plains), *Undaunted* series (details the story of the hole in the rock pioneers).
- Check out [FamilySearch](#). If you don't have an account, this is a great time to make one and if you do and then do a little searching you just may find a treasure trove of pioneer stories that someone has included in your tree. I just found a golden stash today and spent some quality time and shed a few tears reading some of my pioneer stories.
- Watch a great pioneer movie. *17 Miracles* or *Ephraim's Rescue* are two that come to mind. Your children will be



enthralled and it will open the floodgates with questions about your own pioneer heritage.

- Visit a [Family Discovery Center](#) or a pioneer museum. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers has locations in [Ogden](#) and [Salt Lake City](#) and they have amazing collections of artifacts and docents that have limitless knowledge and great stories to tell. We try to take to our kids every year.
- And if you do nothing else, just take a moment, as a family or personally, to reflect on the sweet sacrifice of the forefathers of your family.

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Rachel J. Trotter is a writer at Evalogue.Life, where she tells personal and family stories that inspire, and loves to help you tell yours. She has worked as a writer since her college days over 20 years ago. She loves telling people's stories. She lives in Ogden, Utah and is busy raising six children and loves working on family history alongside her husband, Mat.