



Ancestors Revealed

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You Don't Have to be a Celebrity to Discover Your Ancestors



Beth Mariotti, Genealogist

On March 5th at 8 o'clock, "Who Do You Think You Are" premieres on NBC. The advertising describes that this "ground-breaking series takes seven of America's best-loved celebrities-from Lisa Kudrow to Susan Sarandon-on an emotional journey to trace their family history and discover who they really are." The celebrities "travel the world to discover their pasts". Brooke Shields goes to France to investigate her connection to Louis

XIV. Emmitt Smith travels to Africa and learns about his 3rd great grandfather, who came from the slave coast at age 4 while Spike Lee discovers an ancestor who was a white slave owner. Lisa Kudrow of "Friends" seeks Jewish relatives in Europe and pays her respects at the grave of those who did not escape the holocaust. Matthew Broderick walks the battlefields of Gettysburg where his great great grandfather fought in the Civil War. He says "To follow in my own flesh and bloods footsteps through this very field it's like learning that there's something different in your being than you always thought." His wife, Sarah Jessica Parker, who discovers she has a link to the Salem witch trials in her past, emotes "It changed everything about who I thought I was." Meanwhile, PBS wraps up its series "Faces of

America" on March 3rd at 8. This series, hosted by Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. also follows notables discovering their ancestors, but with more of a focus on the ancestors' participation in American historical events. Eva Longoria Parker learns of her ancestors coming to "the New World" in the 1600s, Queen Noor of Jordan, Stephen Colbert and Yo Yo Ma trace their immigrant roots, Kristi Yamaguchi examines touching details of her Japanese grandfather's service as an American soldier in an all-white unit during WWII. Meryl Streep traces her family back to the early settlers of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. Both of these series do a beautiful job demonstrating the kind of family history information that is available to be found. And they show very realistic reactions people have when their ancestors are revealed to them.

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Meryl Streep & Kristi Yamaguchi, featured in "Faces of America". pbs.org

Contact Information:

Beth Mariotti, Genealogist

E-Mail:
Beth@AncestorsRevealed.com

Phone:
(203)-530-6456

Address:
29 Howard Avenue
Branford, CT 06405

Website:
www.AncestorsRevealed.com

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“TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE, YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHERE YOU CAME FROM”

~“Who Do You Think You Are” promo

Celebrity Genealogy Series (cont.)

A reviewer of the companion guide for “Who Do You Think You Are” touts “The revelations are sometimes shocking, sometimes heartbreaking, and always fascinating.” I only hope that people realize the findings for celebrities are no more fascinating than for anyone else.

I can assure you that in just the past year, working for typical people

like you and me, I have found relations to:

- Benjamin Franklin & Benedict Arnold,
- several pilgrims,
- Deerfield settlers killed in the Indian raids in 1704,
- a witness in a Connecticut witch trial in the early 1700s,
- early settlers of towns throughout New England and the western states,

- followers of RI founder Roger Williams
- immigrants from Europe, Ireland, Sweden,
- holocaust survivors
- soldiers in every American war,
- prohibitionists,
- philanthropists, and
- suffragettes

I encourage everyone to watch these 2 terrific shows and to discover your own fascinating ancestors.

You may not have heard of them, but...

....they were important in their time. One of the exciting things about genealogy is discovering and remembering ancestors who are unknown now, but had fascinating roles in history. I take the opportunity to highlight 3 such individuals here.



Isaac Newton Arnold

Isaac Newton Arnold (1815 - 1884)
Attorney, Legislator and Historian. He was an associate of Abraham Lincoln before Lincoln was President. He served 2 terms as State Representative from Illinois and introduced anti-slavery legislation and legislation confirming the emancipation proclamation and declaring that the constitution should be so amended as to prohibit slavery. Isaac delivered the eulogy of Stephen A. Douglas. He was at the Battle of Bull Run. He served as auditor of the Treasury under President Johnson. As the founder of the Chicago Historical Society, he was given the original emancipation proclamation by President Lincoln. It was held in the Historical Society until the great fire of 1871. James Rawley writes that during the darkest month of the civil war “Lincoln said that of all Republican members of the House of Representatives he could name but one in whose personal and political friendship he could absolutely confide. That one man was Isaac N. Arnold.”



1906 Mason Runabout

Edward Randall Mason (1846 - 1929)
left his medical studies at Keokuk Medical College to fight in the Civil War. After the war, studied law and clerked in the US District Court. In 1903, he established the Mason Motor Car Co., manufactured cars designed by the Deussenbergs and raced them in the Glidden Tour and the Indianapolis 500. He was also an award-winning horse breeder.

Winifred Sprague Mason (1882 - 1936)
As Illinois State Representative, she supported a child labor amendment, and worked for a law to require a national referendum before the U.S. could declare war. She had herself committed to an Ohio prison anonymously to experience inmate conditions first-hand. She also worked a variety of menial jobs anonymously to better represent all of her constituents.

