



THE CENTURY SYSTEM

A standards and licensing company

THE FAMILY CENTURY

The questions we ask before a hundred is written

Prepared for the _____ Family



WHAT THIS IS

A Family Century is one hundred adventures written for one family — its places, its table, its people, its stories — printed in a passbook that every member carries. Adventures get done one at a time, signed by whoever was there, and the book is kept for life.

The hundred is not a list we hand you. It is built out of what your family already has, and the only people who know that are your family. So the work starts here, with questions.

Fill in what you can. Leave blank what you cannot — the gaps are useful too, because a question nobody can answer often makes the best adventure in the book. Nothing here has to be exact, and nothing has to be finished in one sitting. Pass it around.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

We read your answers and draft a hundred adventures for your family. You add what we missed, change whatever you want changed, and send it back. That is the whole method: we bring the structure, the categories and the form; you bring the family.

When the hundred is right, it is printed, and your books, your wheel, your stamps, your coins and your Book of the Centurion are made to carry your name.

Do not invent. Harvest. Everything worth putting in this book has already happened.



I. THE OCCASION

Most Family Centuries are made for a reason and a date. Knowing yours changes what goes in the book and when we have to have it finished.

- Is this for a particular occasion?

Christmas, a reunion, a wedding, a 50th anniversary, a grandmother's 80th birthday, a summer

- If it is a gift, who is it for, and who is giving it?

- What is the date you need it in hand?

- Do you expect this to be played once, or every year?

- Where does the family gather, and when?

a house, a town, a holiday, a week in the summer

II. WHO PLAYS IT

THE KING OR QUEEN

Every Century has one person at the head of it. They hold the Book of the Centurion, press the stamps when a category is finished, seal a completed book, and settle any question the rules do not answer. It is an honor rather than a job, and it usually belongs to whoever the family already treats as its head. The person who buys the Century is often not the person who should hold it.

- Who will be your King or Queen?

KEEPERS

A Keeper acts in their stead. Families spread across several cities usually appoint one per household, so that a cousin three states away can have their book stamped without waiting for a holiday. Keepers can be added at any time.

- Who should be a Keeper, and in which household or city?

THE PLAYERS

- Who will be playing?

Names, and roughly where each of them lives.

- Who is the oldest member of the family, and who is the youngest?

- Is anyone likely to need help getting started?

a child, someone far away, someone who does not travel



III. THE PLACES

Every family has an address that matters more than the others. Give us as many as you can, even the ones you are unsure still exist.

- The original family house — street and town.

- Where the family first landed in this country, if you know it.

- The church, temple or hall the family belonged to.

- The schools.

- Where the family is buried.

- The town or country the family came from.

- The place the family went every summer, or every Sunday.

- Somewhere from a family story that may or may not still be standing.

— A workplace — the mill, the shop, the plant, the firm somebody gave their life to.



IV. THE TABLE

— The dish nobody makes anymore.

— Whose recipe does everyone still want?

— The restaurant, bakery, pizza place, deli or bar the family has always gone to.

— What is always on the table at the holiday?

— What does the family drink, and what is the toast?

— Is there a recipe that exists only in somebody's head?



V. THE PEOPLE AND THE STORIES

— Name your four grandparents.

— Can anyone name all eight above them?

— Who is the matriarch or patriarch of the family — living or dead?

— Who is the storyteller?

— Who has the photographs?

— Which story gets told every single time the family gets together?

— Who has never been asked about their life, and should be?



— Is there someone the family lost touch with?



VI. PAPERS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE NAME

- Does anyone hold naturalization papers, a passenger manifest, letters or a family bible?

- What is the oldest photograph the family owns, and who is in it?

- Are there photographs nobody can label?

- What spellings has the family name worn?

clerks at ports wrote down what they heard, and families often could not correct them

- How is the name pronounced, and does anyone know what it means?

- Has anyone had their DNA tested?

not required, and it opens a different kind of adventure if so



VII. TRADITIONS, AND WHAT IS UNRESOLVED

- The card game, the song, the joke, the thing that happens every year without fail.

- What the family used to do and stopped.

- The question nobody in the family can answer.

- Is there anything that should never go in this book?

every family has one, and we would rather be told

- Anything else we should know.



WHAT A FAMILY CENTURY LOOKS LIKE

A sample, drawn from Centuries already written. Seven categories, and every adventure carries a grade — easy, moderate or difficult — so that a ten-year-old and a grandmother can both finish something on the same afternoon. About half a hundred is easy on purpose.

Read these as a shape rather than a menu. Yours will name your street, your recipe and your people. Mark anything here you want to keep, and cross out anything that is not your family.

I. THE OLD PLACES

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|--|-----------|
| — Stand outside the house the family started in | EASY |
| — Walk the block your grandmother walked to school | EASY |
| — Find the family in an old city directory | DIFFICULT |
| — Find a family grave and clean the stone | EASY |
| — Knock on the door and ask who lives there now | DIFFICULT |

II. THE TABLE

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| — Cook a recipe from her own handwriting | MODERATE |
| — Make the holiday dish nobody has made since she died | DIFFICULT |
| — Eat at the place the family has always gone to | EASY |
| — Write down a recipe that only lives in somebody's head | EASY |

III. PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| — Find a picture of Christmas when you were under ten | EASY |
| — Name everyone in a photograph nobody has labeled | DIFFICULT |
| — Write names and years on the back of ten photographs | EASY |
| — Find the ship and the year they arrived | DIFFICULT |

IV. THE STORIES

- | | |
|---|----------|
| — Record an hour with the oldest person willing | EASY |
| — Ask about an ordinary day, not a famous one | EASY |
| — Ask the question nobody asked | MODERATE |
| — Tell a story to somebody younger than you | EASY |

V. TOGETHER

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| — Get every living generation into one photograph | DIFFICULT |
| — Play the card game the family plays | EASY |
| — Have a meal with a cousin you have never eaten with | EASY |
| — Spend a whole day with a grandparent | EASY |



VI. THE ROAD

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| — Visit the country the family came from | DIFFICULT |
| — Stand in the town on the passenger list | DIFFICULT |
| — Write to somebody abroad who carries the family name | MODERATE |
| — Take a child to the old country | DIFFICULT |

VII. PASSING IT ON

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|---|----------|
| — Write your name onto the family tree in your own hand | EASY |
| — Teach somebody to say the family name properly | EASY |
| — Give a family object to whoever should have it next | MODERATE |
| — Start a child's passbook | EASY |

The last two adventures are the same in every Century. No. 99 is set by your King or Queen on the day. No. 100 is the Centurion's Choice: do the one that meant the most all over again, say so out loud, and close the book.



SENDING IT BACK

Send this to magauran@gmail.com, or write on it by hand and photograph the pages — handwriting is welcome and often better, because it usually means two people sat at a kitchen table and worked it out together, which is exactly the right way to build this.

We will come back with a draft hundred and a first look at your own board, with your family's names on it.



A life well lived, one adventure at a time

www.thecenturysystem.com

