

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US

BY PATRICIA LAW HATCHER, FASG

Today is an anniversary. This column is my one-hundredth column for *Ancestry Daily News*. Many of you tell me that you read my columns and print them out, so I really believe that this is *our* anniversary.

I'd like to take the opportunity to look back at some of the topics that I've covered. My impression is that the subjects of my columns, taken as a whole, demonstrate what genealogy and family history is about—and what it should be about.

My first column appeared on 24 February 2000. It was called LESSONS LEARNED FROM A JIGSAW PUZZLE and addressed the pitfalls in handling genealogical problems that don't fit a classic model. I just reread it while writing this article. I ought to reread it more often.

I guess my life is fairly genealogy-centric. I seem to see lessons in genealogy everywhere. Two years later, I was much wiser as I assembled another jigsaw puzzle (LESSONS LEARNED FROM A JIGSAW PUZZLE II).

And when insomnia drove me to a book of classic detective stories, I found that Dr. Watson had been the recipient of an excellent piece of GENEALOGICAL ADVICE FROM SHERLOCK HOLMES.

We've celebrated birthdays (AS TIME GOES BY), Christmas (JINGLE BELLS), and New Year's (WHERE WILL YOUR RESEARCH TAKE YOU IN 2001? and LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD).

You've seen me clean my office (THE WINGS OF A BUTTERFLY) and organize my time (LESSONS LEARNED ON FOUR HOURS PER WEEK).

Some columns presented advice on methodology (usually by example). My second column, I HATE LEFTOVERS!, described my vacation—and a principle that still guides my research. Others included RED FLAGS AND RATIONALIZATION, ALL THE EASY ANCESTORS ARE TAKEN, and PRECIOUS SIBLINGS.

Although I don't often write about my own ancestral research, you have shared a little of that. An Inspector Morse episode on PBS's "Mystery!" prompted me to tell you about my paternal grandmother's family in

INVESTIGATING FAMILY STORIES. You've learned about a perturbing find in my maternal grandmother's family in A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE LAND OFFICE.

Research for my clients provided all kind of surprising and informative things to share. In A COLONIAL RECORD ODYSSEY we learned that I needed to have flexibility as I followed a frustrating and surprising problem through one American colony after another.

One of the things I discovered in writing the columns was that there was often a lot to discuss. For example, I'd only planned to write one column on dates, but before it was all done, I'd found it necessary to write six of them! Two on RECORDING AND INTERPRETING DATES, two on WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A RECORD, and two on USING DATES TO IMPROVE YOUR RESEARCH.

Surprises abounded in my research, and I got to share some of them with you. I've found connections to a Rembrandt (WHY I NEVER GET ANYTHING DONE ON TIME), to vampires (SEARCHING FOR SUBSTANCE), and to the New Jersey hockey team (FOLLOWING DEVILISH LEEDS).

Most recently, there have been two series. The Word-scape columns present explanations and context for terminology we are likely to encounter in our research, as in RELATIVITY.

The popular nursery-rhyme series has discussed elements of early-American life, from epidemics in RING AROUND A ROSIE to the most recent WEAVING AND LINEN (I ran out of nursery rhymes). I often found that once I began exploring what I thought was a simple subject, it turned out to be much more involved than I imagined. My image of our ancestors' lives has been considerably altered.

Writing the columns for *Ancestry Daily News* forces me to stretch and learn. They force me to examine the accuracy of what I say. They force me to quantify my logic processes in order to explain them to others. They force me to be a better genealogist. I hope they help you, too.