

REWARDS

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The patron saint of genealogy, the one who rewards diligence and thoroughness, wore an inappropriately devilish smile as she broke the microfiche printer. She had a reward planned, but it would be given only if three people were diligent and thorough.

I had found a new ancestor and hired a researcher to obtain documents in the county in which they resided. My researcher was diligent in searching indexes, making copies, and noting sources. She was thorough, finding items for all persons of the surname. She hit a snag, however, when she needed to make copies of the deeds, which were available there only on microfiche.

Of course, she did not know that the mechanical malfunction had been caused by a saint and apologized when she reported to me. I assured her it was not a problem. I could look at the deeds and make copies when I went to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City six weeks later. The trip was entirely booked with teaching, research for the journal I edit, and client work, with no time for my own ancestry, but because she had been thorough in her report, listing all the deeds, I knew it would take only a small amount of time to make the copies.

At the library I hurried, diligently but efficiently loading microfilm, skimming documents, and making copies. But I was also thorough, pausing long enough on each deed to look at the deeds preceding and following the one I needed. The patron saint grinned when I spotted one of my own ancestral surnames on the deed preceding the one I was copying.

I looked at the grantor/grantee opening. It didn't relate to my ancestor. Oh, pooh! It was interesting, however, because it was for someone from a different county than that of the deed book. Based on the county of residence, I immediately recognized it as belonging to a family for which a colleague of mine was preparing a compilation. He is a thorough researcher, so I thought he probably knew about it, but these "stray" deeds can be hard to find, so I planned to copy it anyway. Before doing so, I examined the deed prior to this deed.

As is so often the case, the previous deed was the one in which the land had been acquired. Our thrifty ancestors

often did not record deeds until they needed to in order to establish clear title during a sale.

I continued in my efficient (but thorough!) rush to copy deeds, filing them for review after my return home. When I finally found time, I sat down with my collection of deeds and read every single word. As I read the first stray deed thoroughly, I realized that it was genealogically significant. The land being sold had belonged to a man who died intestate, leaving a son and a daughter. The son was selling his share of the land to the husband of the daughter. This isn't what one would expect, of course, especially since the husband of the daughter was resident in another county.

Genealogically, this meant that the deed proved the name of a wife and identified her father and brother. Did my colleague have this information? My curiosity couldn't wait to know. I called him. No, the wife was identified only by her given name in the records he had found. I immediately mailed the copies to him.

Diligent. Thorough. Two words that should describe our research at all times if we want to solve tough problems. Alas, although I had been diligent and thorough, I was not the person who received the reward this time. That went to my colleague and to the descendants of the couple. I can only hope that the patron saint is at this moment starting another chain of events in motion, and that other researchers will be diligent and thorough.

Oh, wait. My colleague has replied. Yes, the deeds solved one problem, but they raised another. The person is called "junior" in the records. This means there was an older person of the same name in the same place at the same time. He doesn't have such a person in his compilation. Who can the "senior" be? His compilation focused primarily on the county of residence. I wonder if maybe the "junior" applied to the county in which the land lay. My colleague and I will begin our diligent and thorough research there. Maybe it will lead to a breakthrough on my own line of that surname. Can anyone tell if the patron saint is wearing a very big grin? I hope so.