

I took a little hiatus so I could get some research done for clients, but I'm back and ready to rock! Let's have a little check in on my new paid services, a few things I think are noteworthy in this new year, and some actions we can all take to hold FamilySearch, Facebook and Ancestry accountable for some unexplained service issues. Time to get LOUD! Oh, and Happy New Year!



Happy New Year, and welcome to Episode 301 of From Paper To People, the podcast with a broad focus and a refined point of view. My name is Carolynn ni Lochlainn, and I am your hostess with the mostest in these next few minutes, fresh from a bit of a break and raring to go. Let's chat. As we start this new season and end January, I have a bunch of fragments in mind, and I want to be sure to get them out there to you. So let's call this a new year's news update with tips, tricks and how-to's that have been occurring to me in my recent work.

What's new in your New Year? Have you hit the ground running, or are you getting a slow start? I am energized as all giddy-up, though I don't know why, even to the point of being over-committed. Here's my news: First, I'm running a swag special: sign up to support the podcast at patreon.com/ancestorsalive for \$5/month between now and Valentine's Day, and stay subscribed for a minimum of three months, and in early May I'll send you a limited-edition podcast logo shotglass! It's really nice - heavy glass and a clearly-printed design. Tea-totalers can use it for paper clips, as a paper weight, or as patron Kara Carey says, use it for administering herbal medicines. I use mine to hold dye when I color my eyebrows. Seriously.

Next, I'm changing my time usage a bit by adding a paid service. I'm back to performing basic genealogical services and biological parent hunts at \$50/hour, with a free consultation to start. I need to fund my reparational work somehow, right? I'm working on DAR applications, basic tree building, and teaching, and of course, finding genetic relatives for those low on paperwork but high on curiosity. If you're interested, you can contact me at

ancestorsalivegenealogy@gmail.com, or on the contact form at my website, ancestorsalivegenealogy.com. My increasing forays into DNA triangulation searches to help people find unknown parents resulted recently in finding BOTH birth parents for a friend. It's very exciting work, so if you need it, I'm here for you.

I'm focusing more and more on the little things in [FamilySearch](#) as I carry my reparational work forward, so expect me to share more things about that site with you in addition to Ancestry this year.

And I have secured some truly ROCKIN' interviewees for this year. I'm leaving those as surprises, though. No counting chickens before they hatch.

I do have a sad note from my household: right after Thanksgiving, my beloved, darling, and exceedingly fluffy boy Tort, a 16-year-old black cat with 5"-long fur and a constant look of skepticism, needed to cross over. It was extremely sad, but we made it a very loving, peaceful and beautiful passing. And, as requested and expected, he sent me a new kitty. I'm sitting next to a 6-month-old cow kitten this minute named...wait for it...Centimorgan. She is utterly insane, she beeps, she sleeps more deeply than any cat I've ever seen except other cow cats, she tries to type, she chews on the laptop, she switches the closed captioning on when I'm watching my tablet, and once she managed to turn off my touchpad for over a week so that I had to use a USB mouse with my laptop. Centi is happy to be part of the family, and I hope you will welcome her as a new podcast mascot along with her older sister, Shukran.

This year, in terms of my own work and our work together, I am all about cousin bait, so a lot of the things I'm thinking about in this episode will help you with making connections by putting out information for cousins to find. Others are just about reasons I'm annoyed. Because, you know, I'm just like that.

I'm using my own blog, where my podcast episodes are released, to launch my #blog2020

#cousinbait #reparationalgenealogy blogging project, providing data and documents that identify and document each of my many enslaving ancestors. I expect it to be slow going, and I have been fighting with WordPress to let me upload the necessary graphic files, but I'm getting there.

I have a second blog, though, and I don't think I've made that clear to everybody. It's at patreon.com/ancestorsalive. While Patreon is the site where you can sign up to financially support the show, it provides me with a blog function, as well. I use it to post educational videos, documentaries, genealogy TV show episodes, news articles, and other items of interest so that my regular blog isn't pumping too much data into podcast subscribers' feeds. You can sign up to view this blog without supporting the podcast financially, and Patreon lets me choose whether any given post is public, private, or geared to specific giving tiers only.

I'd love it if ALL listeners subscribed there and enjoyed the public content, because it's pretty broad in its variety - archaeology, history, genealogy, folklore, and all of that from a variety of international sources. And, of course, if you are a financial supporter, you have access to video lessons that others can't see. But since most of the content is public (or will be, when I go back and correct the privacy settings for over 2 years' worth of content), I hope you'll subscribe.

Otherwise, I hope you'll sign up to receive posts from my primary blog, Ancestors Alive! Genealogy.

Now, to the teaching portion of this episode. I have a quick tip for FamilySearch to help you find living, researching cousins. And yes, I believe that everyone with an Ancestry accounts should be on FamilySearch, as well. Remember that the two sites function very differently: Ancestry lets each account-holder create a tree that functions as a discrete room in a building, and the creator determines who can see in and who can walk in. FamilySearch is one big tree, a big building with lots of hallways that cross one another just as our families do in real life, with no limitations other than the fact that no living people are visible. It's a one-

world tree, with one electronic representation of each person who ever lived and can be documented, ideally, though there are errors that need to be repaired via merging all the time.

For those of you who are paying patrons of the podcast, you may remember that I made a screenshot video detailing how to set up your FamilySearch account. I discussed all of the things that you need to do to maximize success in FamilySearch using the “SETTINGS” pages. This particular little trick is under the “CONTACT” tab in the “SETTINGS” section under your name at the upper right of the screen. If you go to the bottom of that page, you’ll find the place to tick a box by “RELATIONSHIPS” to allow you to see your relationship to other contributors using FamilySearch, and vice-versa. It’s an excellent way to say “hey, I’m not a Jeffrey – let’s collaborate.” It’s the ultimate in cousin bait. And don’t we all want to start the year with that kind of open, cooperative attitude?

BUT: You can also ask for anyone on FamilySearch to do the same thing. When two people on FamilySearch have this function switched on, clicking on the username of a contributor to an ancestor’s profile will show the relationship between the two people. So, if you ask a contributor to turn theirs on, you will get to see your relationship to him or her according to the FamilySearch tree’s current documentation and research. There is no DNA involved, because FamilySearch does not utilize DNA information at all. How you do this is simple: If you look at an ancestor’s profile, and that ancestor has facts listed below the vital stats that originate from an attached document, you’ll see that those stats, like a residence place and year from a census, have a submitter’s name next to them. Each submitter’s name is a hotlink – click on it, and there will be a little squiggle with a dot at each end and the legend “REQUEST TO VIEW RELATIONSHIP.” Click on that, and the other person will receive notice asking them to turn on their relationship finder. This is a really cool little thing to use, and it will enable you to collaborate more efficiently with people working on the same lines as you.

Next in tips and tricks, a question and complaint about Ancestry: is their constant upgrading or whatever they’re doing with their computer power ALL UP IN YOU CRAW? They are

seriously dragging me down. I am finding countless weird errors with Ancestry - a Kentucky census coming up with French-language descriptions, hints appearing but when I try to save them to the tree I'm in, the system ignores the tree I'm in and asks which of my other 200 trees it wants me to pick from a drop down menu. A few minutes later, all will magically work again, but then, BAM! it'll go back to freak-out mode. Here's the thing - Ancestry is not displaying ANY banners onscreen to say that they're doing work, or that part of the system may be down between certain hours. The issues, furthermore, are happening at every hour of the day, as well as during nighttime hours USA time that might be used to add servers to the system, move collections between servers, or whatever.

This is INCREDIBLY frustrating to me. I've been working on finding bio-parents, which means creating multiple mirror and fallen-branch trees and it slows my work down enormously, not to mention it makes me VERY VERY GRUMPY, and crave sugar, when these things happen. A few Twitter friends have asked me whether they should dump their Ancestry service because of the level of issues they too have been experiencing, but I say no. If you are having such issues with hints, or with any other function in Ancestry, I urge you to tweet to Ancestry about them. Put a period in front of the AT sign so that the tweet will show up on their feed. Don't swear, but be as forceful and clear as needed. And above all, use the hashtag #ancestryproblems. I think we need this to blow up.

I'm not trying to stir up trouble here, but Ancestry clearly is not providing the level of customer service that it used to under its original ownership, and we need to secure better service by demanding it. They asked me to provide proof, and I made a screenshot video of this stuff occurring, but Twitter's DM system wouldn't accept the format of the video, so I couldn't provide that evidence via Twitter. I think that tweeting descriptions of errors with the #ancestryproblems hashtag is our best recourse. But please, don't quit your membership; be a responsible consumer and demand better service.

NOW: January 15th was a Bad News, Good News day. The bad news is from FamilySearch and Facebook, and the good news is a reminder. To end happily, let's start with the bad news

first: as of the 15th, FamilySearch and Facebook Messenger discontinued their popular family calendar notification collaboration. There used to be a service that you could sign up for at FamilySearch, allowing Facebook Messenger to access your family tree in FamilySearch. This enabled a Messenger bot that would send you birth and marriage dates of your lineal ancestors, first thing in the morning on those dates. I found it incredibly useful for microblogging, as the kids are calling it these days – these prompts urged me to post a portrait or headstone photo and bio of the birthday or marriage celebrants on Instagram that I could then publish to my Ancestors Alive! Genealogy Facebook page and to my Twitter account.

But on January 9, I received the following message from the FamilySearch Facebook Messenger bot itself: “Facebook will no longer allow FamilySearch to use Facebook Messenger to send subscription-based notifications. FamilySearch will end support for Facebook Messenger on 15 January 2020. You will receive future Calendar Notifications as FamilySearch notifications on familysearch.org.”

I have searched the internet and even called FamilySearch, but there is absolutely no policy explanation for this, and frankly, I think it stinks. It was a fantastic service! It served as a terrific reminder for folks to log in and check out their ancestors, to do a little work, and to keep in tune with genealogy on a weekly basis, at least. It also provided awesome cousin bait via Instagram and wherever else people were posting info from these reminders. It fed Amy Johnson Crow’s #52Ancestors Challenge. In short, it was yummy, now it’s gone, and I have no idea why.

Furthermore, it sent messages about hints, and for me as a member of the LDS Church, it sent me alerts about ancestors ready for the Temple.

Not only did I use this service for microblogging, but it also made me go back and check ancestors out on FamilySearch, which occasionally led to updates or even corrections in their work there. And I used it as a prompt to find and merge duplicates, this being a one-world

tree with only ONE version of each human who ever lived, and to prepare ancestors for religious work.

From now on, all of this information will be available, but only in your FamilySearch inbox, which is NOT as handy as having it go into Facebook first thing in the morning. You'll also receive all of these notices, and notices of upcoming ancestral birthdays and anniversaries, in the email account associated with your FamilySearch account. But still, bummer.

I have a bit of a how-to save for you, however: you can print out a calendar of your direct-line ancestors' major life events. This is groovy because it also shows deaths (my personal favorite vital stat). Go to familysearch.org/campaign/calendar and log in. You'll see a timeline for every month of the year, showing your ancestors' births, marriages, and deaths. If you scroll down to the very bottom of the page, you'll see a blue button that says PRINT. You can print out a wall calendar for yourself for the entire year (each month is a different color - it's pretty awesome) and you can also download it as a .ics file. If you do that, you can add it to your phone's calendar as sourced from your email account, which is even MORE fun!

If you are as annoyed by this unexplained policy change as I am, please tweet to FamilySearch and Facebook saying that you want them to keep the Calendar of Ancestral Moments bot in Facebook. I already have tweeted (no reply), and will continue to. You can also call FamilySearch to register a complaint and seek an explanation at 800-406-1830. By the way, when I called FamilySearch about this, not only had the missionary who answered the phone not heard a policy reason for the service being discontinued, she'd never heard of the FamilySearch Facebook bot service in the first place! Maybe not enough people used it to warrant continued support. Probably, FamilySearch did an inadequate job of advertising the service when it started in 2018. Regardless, if you're bummed, tweet and call.

And now the GOOD January 15th thing: New York State Original Birth Certificates are now available to adoptees and fosters born anywhere in New York! This means that those of unknown parentage who were born in New York, either living or directly descended of the

deceased, are now eligible to get the long form of their birth certificates. Now, just as for other human beings, certificates will include identifying information about the applicant's biological parents. This will enable adoptees and fosters to create biological family trees, and descendants of adoptees to break through brick walls to do the same. And apparently, offices statewide have been inundated with requests, proving that New York could have saved themselves a log jam and made a consistent stream of revenue if they hadn't been such cavemen in the first place. This gives me hope for other states considering the same change in their laws.

Let me reiterate: If you are seeking a birth certificate for an ancestor who was born in New York and was either adopted or fostered, you can apply for that certificate as well.

This is how to apply for your Original Birth Certificate:

Fill out the application at VitalChek, at bit.ly/37i6QZn. I think they're a bit of a scam because they cost more money, but you can print out the application and walk it into the office that will provide your birth certificate if you're nearby. Otherwise, you do have to use VitalChek.

VitalChek has a drop-down menu that allows you to choose New York from all US states. Select New York. If you choose "PERSONAL RECORDS/USE" or "RESEARCH/FAMILY TREE" as the reason for request, your certificate will cost \$15 with a VitalChek fee of \$8.30. That's why I think going into the County Clerk's office or Township's office for the location of your birth is a better idea, if you can. If not, bite the bullet and pay that extra \$8.30, just so you can get the thing already!!!

Alternately, you can download a pdf file to fill out manually and send in with a check. My uncertainty about this recommendation is that it provides for you to fill in the names of your parents. If you were adopted or fostered, you won't have this information. And the likelihood that a New York locality's office might reject your application or prolong the process by not understanding your request is, frankly, very large.

You will need to provide all sorts of documentation – New York is downright hostile about giving up the records that it should by law. Driver’s license or state ID with birth, marriage and death certificates tying you to your ancestor, or your non-identifying birth certificate along with personal ID if you’re seeking your own birth certificate, are all good ideas for enclosures in your application.

DO NOT APPLY TO THE OFFICE IN ALBANY UNLESS EXPRESSLY TOLD TO! County and township offices produce records more quickly than the statewide office in the state’s capital.

But ultimately, don’t take my word for it. Call them Monday-Friday 8:30AM-5:00PM Eastern Time at 855-322-1022, or email them at vr@health.ny.gov.

As ever, I’ll provide all links in the shownotes.

So, aren’t you happy? That’s such excellent news! It is possible to find bio parents using DNA and triangulation, but isn’t it nice that yet another state government is moving toward releasing records to those who deserve them?

We got through some good tips, tricks, and how-to’s today, which I’m always happy to do. Remember, you are welcome to come on the podcast for an interview if you’ve written a book, have a unique genealogy-related service, or even if you have a family recipe and story to share on the Family Cookbook series. Just drop me a line using the contact form on my website, ancestorsalivegenealogy.com. Otherwise, remember that limited-time shotglass offer at patreon.com/ancestorsalive. Join 207 members in our ever-growing Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/FromPaperToPeople to find community and answers. Do your research, don’t be a Jeffrey, and above all, Expect Surprises!



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