

Happy New Year, and welcome to Season 2! I meet so many people who have no idea about that which should not be a well-kept secret: Twitter is fantastic for genealogists! If you do the right things in the right ways (yes, of COURSE I'll teach you those), you can build a community for yourself in the genealogy section of Twitter. People are funny, kind, helpful, and they will not only help you, they'll give you the opportunity to help them with their research. Strap in and come for a ride with me - Twitter can be a wonderful place!
#DontBeAJeffrey



Hello, and welcome to the first episode of season two of From Paper to People, Ancestors Alive! Genealogy's many-faceted podcast. I am your hostess with the mostest, Carolyn ni Lochlainn, and I want to take a moment to say thank you to everyone who is listening, and even to everyone who listened once and abandoned hope for this podcast! You know, I'm feeling charitable, so everybody, let's thank Father Philip Hubbard of Hampton Bays, New York who sent me passive-aggressive, misogynistic hate email back in early May. Thanks, dude! You Episcopalian priests are a hoot!! Every one of you are important to some phase of the podcast's growth and evolution, and I appreciate you so much. The podcast turned 1 year old on the 3rd of January, at which point we had topped 15,000 listens. Whaaaat? I had an episode about New Year's Eve and New Year's Day all ready to go, but you know, I'm not feeling it. I'm a little holidayed out. I wanted to teach more than I did during the holiday season, so why don't we get back into some genealogy and family history topics right away. Start the New Year right. We can always talk a bit about holiday traditions another time.

But first, we have news from the FPPP Patreon Army - first, Kate Londagin is our latest Branch. Thank you so much, Kate!!! We're glad to have you along. Second, increased support has allowed me to add an audio filtration process that will increase the quality in the levels in my interviews. I am very happy about this! Thank you to my Patreon Army for helping to improve podcast audio quality for all. [applause sound effect]

You know, you can support me as well by going to patreon.com/join/ancestorsalive. It's simple and it makes a real difference in what I can do for you.

And now, the Genie News. From the podcast, I can tell you that in the next few weeks I will be getting swag out to first-year supporters and to first-year guests. And in a few weeks, I will be adding swag to the various [Patreon](#) levels, as well. In terms of the website and my own work, I am making some changes, as promised. From now on, I will not be doing any paid research at all. I will concentrate my time on my own work, researching two books, and on assisting Patreon subscribers and Facebook group members with their research. The only research I will be taking on from now on, as my schedule allows, is research for persons descended of the enslaved, and that will all be 100% free of charge. I am moving slowly toward a non-profit idea, but it's going to take a lot of careful configuration, so I won't talk about it until I have a lot more work done. But we're starting off the year right.

In other Genie News...it's a new year, with new projects and new seasons for all. Have you ever wondered where I get this stuff? Almost ALL items are drawn from Twitter, of course! Today we are talking about precisely that - using GENIE TWITTER to stay up to date and to build community, so I'll give you handles to follow with each news item.

PBS is showing the first episode of the new season of Finding Your Roots TONIGHT at 8pm ET. It features Andy Samberg and George R.R. Martin. It ought to be good! Follow [@HenryLouisGates](#) for details on the season.

BlackProGen returns tonight with Episode 74: Reverse Genealogy, DNA and Tracing the Living. It's at 9pm Eastern Standard Time on YouTube. You can find their channel by searching for BlackProGen, one word, on YouTube, or follow [@blackprogen](#) on Twitter for more details and future episodes.

[VirtualGenealogy.org](#) is having their first online meeting on Tuesday, January 15th at 6pm Pacific Time. The topic is a hot one for many in the US and Canada: Researching ancestors

from Spanish-speaking countries. Pre-registration is required, so go to virtualgenealogy.org to sign up. Follow @virtualgenassoc and @colleengreene for more information.

GenChat has a new website: <http://genchatgenealogy.com>. Bookmark it and you can sync the Genchat meeting schedule with your Google calendar! Talk about a great way to use Twitter with the hashtag #genchat. Follow them @_genchat. We'll talk more about GenChat in a few minutes.

AncestryHour, another Twitter-based conversational series, is restarting TODAY, January 8th, from 7-8PM GMT (that's 2pm Eastern Time) for brick walls, shaky leaves, & other #familyhistory joys. Look for the hashtag #ANCESTRYHOUR or follow @ancestryhour for more information.

Amy Johnson Crow is rebooting her very successful 52 Ancestors in 52 Weeks challenge for writing prompts and ideas to get you going on writing about your family history. You can find more details at buff.ly/2Kq5tQ0, or follow Amy @amyjohnsoncrow on Twitter. Use the hashtag #52ANCESTORS when posting pieces about your ancestors on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter and you will join an international conversation.

AND some great news from Michael W Twitty, winner of two James Beard awards for his book, *The Cooking Gene* - He is starting a GoFundMe in January to pay for his first filmographer to document his second culinary pilgrimage to West Africa. His goal is to make *The Cooking Gene* a path of cultural reclamation and reconciliation. He's headed to Benin and Togo in March to examine the links between West African foodways and traditional spirituality and healing practices. He expects to raise \$12k to make this possible. As soon as details are available, I'll let you know, OR you could visit his beautiful blog at afroculinarian.com, or follow him on Twitter @koshersoul for updates.

So. Twitter. The bane of many a good soul's existence, the fiery hell where bots and the generically soulless go to eviscerate others without care and then die in anonymous

ignominy. I know. Twitter has a bad rep, and for a lot of valid reasons, but Twitter is actually the most fantastic place for genealogists to meet and collaborate. Instagram is cool for sharing photos and some ideas, but it's limited by the visual nature of the platform. Facebook, which I really want to leave for a lot of reasons, is just too big and full of way too many people who are in genie groups purely to gratify their own egos rather than teach or perform service. I used to enjoy membership in a bunch of Facebook groups, occasionally contributing and reading a lot of interesting posts, but senior members of these groups got really vicious. And then, there's the racism in this one particular hereditary descendants group which shall remain nameless – I doubt I'll ever go to the trouble of completing my application to any hereditary society other than the DAR after the stuff I saw there. It was sickening. So I bagged pretty much everything other than surname groups I started on Facebook, DNA Detectives, and a few other reparationally-directed groups. Facebook has dropped more than a few notches for me.

But Twitter is really amazing – supportive, funny, educational, with people doing lookups for one another in local archives just because. And that's how it should be. So, let me tell you my story of getting involved on Twitter in hopes of you seeing how it worked for me. Then, you can do the same for yourself, take advantage of a worldwide network of lovely, cooperative people, and advance your research and your professional circles. It will also give you the opportunity to give back.

I first created an account for my genealogy business, Ancestors Alive! Genealogy, in 2012. A friend taught me how to use it, but I was social media awkward nevertheless. He told me that it's considered bad etiquette to go on and just blast information about my business, and that I should develop conversations and relationships with people by following hashtags that related to my business and my interests. He told me to follow people who had interesting things to say, and once I felt comfortable, to chime in on conversations. He also told me that my genealogy account should be JUST about genealogy, and not about photography, or anything else that I was into. I made separate accounts for my various interests and small businesses, and kept the personal stuff to a personal account.

Back then, I was barely doing any research for others, I didn't realize anyone would be interested in the weird stories I was finding in my own family, and I felt like the girl who was forced to go to prom with her cousin from Teaneck, New Jersey. It just wasn't comfortable. So, I let the account languish for a few years, with only occasional visits that did nothing to build lasting friendships.

Late in 2017, when I was preparing for the podcast, I realized that I wanted to get the word out, but I also realized that I didn't know anybody in genealogy on Twitter. I started to follow the hashtags #GENEALOGY and #FAMILYHISTORY because they seemed pretty obvious, and I soon found myself reading conversations and occasionally contributing - usually a punchline, of course. I started following people, and a few people followed back.

When it was time to set up my social media autopublishing for my podcast episodes (to sites like LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, and so forth), I made sure that I was hitting all the right places, and that included Twitter. As the first few episodes published and I was writing new ones, I started to ask some questions on Twitter surrounding upcoming scripts. I got a few answers here and there, but not much. I hadn't established myself yet. The really fun and interesting conversations started when I let my hair down and told stories about the actual tree research I was doing, and responded to what others were doing. And then, all of a sudden, I noticed that a guy named Sir Leprechaun Rabbit, a Canadian genealogist with a bajillion friends who's involved with all things Genie Twitter, had started retweeting my episode posts with recommendations, so that others would see about them and maybe listen. I'm getting him on for an interview, by the way. We tried to do it last year, it didn't work out, but this year? Definitely.

That one action he took was so generous, and because he has so many followers, I felt like I'd been allowed to sit at the cool kids' table in the cafeteria. I felt more comfortable starting conversations, asking questions, and being involved. I found more hashtags to follow, including #FOLKLORE and #FOLKLORETHURSDAY, and then Sir Leprechaun Rabbit told me about #GENCHAT. We'll have him explain that when he's on, but basically it's an hour-long

live chat on Twitter, with all participants answering questions posed by moderators using the hashtag GENCHAT. And as I said in the News, GENCHAT just developed its own website, which looks fantastic, by the way. GENCHAT has different leaders and topics each week, and there's also a #GENCHATDNA. It's really a warm community. He also told me about #Ancestryhour, which is based in the UK.

Now, I look forward to going on Twitter. I take my own questions there, as well as questions from members of the Facebook group. One time, I had a question about tracing the demise of my Confederate 3rd great-grandfather. I had tried with phone calls and online look-ups on my own, but I hadn't found anything to prove his service, let alone his death – all I knew was that his wife remarried his 4th cousin by the 1870 Census. To my great surprise, I mentioned my ancestor in a comment and people popped out of the woodwork offering to do some research for me. I was absolutely overwhelmed, and though the mystery about him remains, the fact that strangers were all about helping me just because it was Genie Twitter was the coolest thing. I have bad days, and when things like that happen, I really get the boost that I need to pick myself up and keep moving forward.

So, how do you avoid being a Twitter Jeffery? How do you do it RIGHT?

First, make a Twitter account that is dedicated to genealogy. Leave your politics and fashion goss at the door as much as you can, and don't drag in your other hobbies too much. Most folks do branch out a bit, myself included, but if you're just starting to use Twitter for genealogy, keep it pure for a little while until folks know you a bit. Make your handle something to do with your name, something to do with your research, but don't go cutesy. I personally have doubts about cute Twitter handles. #BOTS

Next, fill out your profile completely, including a profile photo. It would be great if you used the same one as you use on Ancestry. I use my professional logo, my real name for my name, and my handle is @AncestorsAlive. Show that you are a real person, not a Russian bot. I have actually encountered bot accounts that were set up to look like genealogy accounts!

Apparently, foreign political agents are watching “Who Do You Think You Are?” and see it as an “in” to US, and possibly other, national cultures. In your profile, be sure to add a description of yourself, including hashtags pertaining to your interests or the hashtags you follow most often. It’ll help folks identify where you’re coming from when they are trying to decide whether or not to follow you.

Choose a header photo – something that pertains to your work, like a scan of an old family letter, or a grouping of old family photos. Make it groovy. Then, choose a color scheme, to delight the eyes of those who view your profile online – make it fancy schmancy if you want. Don’t induce migraines or seizures, but be distinctive. My header is the same as on my Facebook page and my business cards, and my color scheme is a darkish blue to match my website. #NoNeon

DO NOT make your Twitter feed private – the whole point of Twitter is to find new friends and engage in conversations based on what you share, as well as what others share. Let people follow you. It’s like entering a cocktail party – don’t wear a paper bag on your head. #COMMONSENSE

Keep it balanced – don’t go follow-crazy! The ideal account has roughly an equal number of followers and accounts it’s following. You’ll be out of balance at first, sure, but if in 3 months your account follows a thousand people and you have 5 followers, you’re going to look like a bot. Have patience, Young Luke. The Force is with you. #ObligatoryStarWarsReference

Follow back if you like a person’s content. It’s not obligatory, but it’s polite. You can always mute them if they irk you, or unfollow them. #NothingIsSetInStone

As for content, QUALITY MATTERS. Post articles there based on your favorite topics. I post on folklore, genealogy, archaeology, dna, and specific historical issues in genealogy and dna. I sometimes do a little Google search to find interesting articles to post. And, of course, I look for interesting articles about African diasporic foods and culture as they pertain to history,

lore and genealogy. I also favor my Irish roots from time to time.

Post family photos with brief descriptions about the people in them – freaky stories are always a plus. Make people laugh with you! They love that stuff and you will have great conversations as a result.

Find posts to enjoy on Twitter by searching good hashtags. It's the pound sign in front of a word or series of words with no spaces; #FOLKLORE, #FAMILYHISTORY, #ANCESTOR, #ANCESTORS, #ANCESTRY, #FAMILYSEARCH, and #GENEALOGY are great ones to start with. You'll find more as you snorkle the surface of Twitter.

Heart EVERYTHING you like on Twitter, and retweet everything that you think is important. Comment on things whenever possible, even if it's just to say "Agreed!". People appreciate it when you notice and retweet their posts. Don't be oily; be your most magnanimous self. Once you're at the cocktail party, enjoy yourself. #GenerosityCounts

Follow people who say, stand for, or do things that you like. Follow people whom you aspire to be like someday. They won't always follow you back, but it's not a numbers game; it's about engaging with people in conversations even if they really aren't that into you. You can learn at any time, especially when you don't expect it. Having a lot of followers is a silly game that children and the egocentric, maladjusted megalomaniacs play. And BLOCK anybody who offers to sell you followers. Becky, please.

Once you've established some friendships and you feel like you know what some genealogists and folklorists, historians and archivists do, ask a brick-wall question. If you can do it with a photo, so much the better – people pay attention to photos and visual aids. And if you feel comfortable directing it to someone specifically because you know that it's his or her field, go for it. But all Ancestry.com Jeffrey rules apply here, too: be courteous, gracious, informative, and a very good neighbor. Start by asking "Would you help me with a question about something?" People love to help courteous people, right? None of us enjoys a "yo,

gimme your tree” message on Ancestry – why would we on Twitter? #DontBeAJeffrey

Be sparing in your use of DMs with people. If you can keep requests public, it’s better. It’s an etiquette thing, one that I learned the hard way. Don’t burn bridges.

To do a good job of building relationships, expect to spend 10-15 minutes on Twitter one or two times a day, so that you catch all of the time zones you want to catch. Read posts with hashtag searches, follow people, heart and retweet things, and post a few things of your own. Once you’re comfortable, jump into a thread with a comment or question. Tell a joke. Do you. Follow this pattern daily and you will build the kind of support system that gives you answers when you have questions, or offers you help when you didn’t realize you needed it. It will also give you opportunities to provide aid to strangers. And that is the grooviest gravy.

I want to thank my network for being so utterly awesome – and if you want some great accounts to follow, I’ll add them to the show notes and post them on the website. I follow over 800 accounts, but these were especially helpful to me in my first year of the podcast. Not all follow me, but I had great conversations, or learned from posts from all of these accounts.

We’ll have some challenges and assignments on Twitter coming up this year, so I hope that you will get active there. If you do these simple things, 10-15 minutes, once to twice a day (say, morning and evening), you will find yourself a lot less alone in your work than you were. You’ll be laughing, gossiping, comparing notes, learning, and really digging into your work with renewed enthusiasm when you utilize Twitter with good, strong hashtags, conversations, and content.

And that’s our chat for the day! I hope the new year is treating you well. We’ll be discussing some New Year’s issues, from traditions to resolutions, later this month. Find all things FPPP at ancestorsalivegenealogy.com – links to all previous episodes, all my social media incarnations, blah blah blah. Follow me at patreon.com/ancestorsalive for additional

information and, of course, to join the Patreon Army that makes all things possible. Until next time, do your research, don't be a Jeffrey, get to grooving on Genie Twitter, and above all, Expect Surprises!


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