



## Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

# What Are Your 2020 Genealogy Goals?

By Joanne Mason

The new year is fast approaching, and many of us look forward to putting up a new calendar, admiring those empty squares so full of promise. People often make new year's resolutions to eat healthier, get more exercise, quit smoking, or read more books. Others decide against resolutions, figuring they never stick anyway.

Maybe it would help to call them *goals* instead of *resolutions*.

Do you make genealogy goals? Here are four to consider for 2020:

- **Take care of that one thing you've been meaning to do for years.** Maybe that's sending a box of mementoes to your cousin, contacting some DNA matches, learning a new genealogy computer program, or visiting your ancestors' homeland. For me, it's finally adding my grandmother's date of death to her gravestone. I have no idea why my father didn't take care of this when she passed in 1976, but 2020 is the year I stop saying, "One of these days . . ."
- **Get those photos scanned!** Still sorting through shoebox after shoebox full of old photos? Organizing and labeling photos can be an overwhelming task. Try resolving to scan one picture a day or 20 a week – whatever frequency works best for you. Or try planning a scanning marathon one snowy afternoon. You might invite a young relative, like a grandchild, to help out and share some of the stories behind the photos.

- **Tell your story.** In 1987, my great Aunt Dot wrote a six-page document called “Times I Remember.” She described what it was like to grow up in Springfield in the 1920s – singing with her family around the piano, playing the bugle in the school band, and ice skating with friends on Lake Lorraine. Ever present in these stories were her sister – my grandmother – and I learned so much about our family history in these pages.

If you’re interested in telling your stories, think in smaller parts. You don’t have to write your whole life history. Maybe there is one particular event you’d like to share, like the time you danced in the mud at Woodstock or the day your grandmother taught you how to make her famous meatball recipe. Just get the words down, and don’t worry so much about spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Remember, too, that telling your story doesn’t have to be on paper. You can make an audio recording, film a video, or put together a photo album. Your descendants will be glad you did!

- **Visit a historical site.** We may spend hours tracking down our ancestors’ names and information, but putting their lives in context makes the experience so much richer. Places like Plimoth Plantation and Ellis Island are great ideas, but our local area also offers a wealth of areas to explore. Did your ancestor work at the Springfield Armory? Have you visited Storrowton Village or Old Sturbridge Village lately? How about a library’s local history room? Or one of your town’s historic homes? I don’t think I’ve been to Historic Deerfield since I was a child, so that is on my 2020 to-visit list.

What are your goals? Wherever your genealogical journey takes you in 2020, we wish you a happy and healthy new year!

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