

May I Introduce to You . . . Molly Charboneau

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I am excited to introduce to you Molly Charboneau of [Molly's Canopy](#). As a writer-editor by day and a genealogist on her own time, Molly puts her skills to good use as she takes us inside her ancestors' lives through stories, letters, pictures and personal remembrances.

Molly Tell us a little about your self.

"I grew up in upstate New York and now live in New York City in the borough of Queens. I majored in history and political science as an undergraduate and environmental health science at the graduate level, and brought knowledge from those fields to my professional career as a writer and editor – working first in print publications and later in digital communications and as a website content editor. So the transition to blogging about family history seemed natural for me."

How did you get involved in family history?

"My family's history always intrigued me because of our varied heritage: French, English, Irish, Welsh, German, Italian and Swiss. But the thrill of finding the 1832 baptismal record of my Québécois great, great grandfather in a Montréal archive was what sparked my interest in doing ongoing genealogy research.



"My parents had also recently retired, and I realized that their personal histories – and those of family members they knew – could be lost if they were not gathered and preserved for future generations. So I proposed that we take family history trips together – first to Otter Lake in New York's Adirondack Mountains region, where my dad grew up; then to my mom's hometown of Gloversville, New York; then to other towns upstate where our ancestors once lived – and my genealogy research just continued from there."

How did you choose the name for your blog?

"In addition to a love of genealogy, I enjoy being out in nature and have been involved in supporting tree planting in my neighborhood to increase the urban canopy. I got thinking about the word "canopy" and how it embraced both of these worlds – family trees and real ones – so I called my blog Molly's Canopy."

Why did you start a genealogy blog?

"On a pre-Internet research trip with my dad, we learned from the 1865 New York State census that we had a Civil War ancestor. I obtained his Union Army pension file, studied the battles he fought in, and knew I wanted to write about him, and about other ancestors. The prospect of a family history book seemed daunting. But as genealogists took to blogging, that seemed like the ideal way for me to begin sharing family stories.

"I started my blog Molly's Canopy in April 2014 during the Sesquicentennial of the US Civil War – to coincide with attending my first reenactment of some 1864 battles my ancestor fought in. From there, I decided to track his movements throughout the war, examine his life in the larger historical context, and write about it each week. My

blog has continued in that vein – looking at the lives of my ancestors, who were average folks but special to me, and examining how they fit into the broader society of their era.”

How have you benefited from blogging?

“The regular discipline of writing a weekly blog post has allowed me to review and analyze my past genealogy research, supplement it where needed with additional research and begin to tell my ancestors’ stories. Having my forbears out in the world, instead of hidden away in files, has been an enriching experience. Along the way I have also connected with many wonderful fellow travelers – genealogists and family historians who share the same passion, new-found cousins who share the same ancestors, and blog readers, including relatives and friends, who leave encouraging comments – and they make the research journey that much more enjoyable.”

How long have you been doing family history research and how has your focus changed over the years?

“I have been doing family history research for 25 years. In the beginning, the emphasis was on bonding with my parents through family history road trips, amassing documents about as many ancestors as possible, and doing oral history interviews of my mom, dad and our older relatives. Though the research continues, my focus has shifted to telling the family stories that those road trips, documents and interviews revealed so they will be there for future generations.”

What are your favorite blog posts from Molly’s Canopy and why?

Remembering Aunt Rita <http://mollyscanopy.com/2015/11/remembering-aunt-rita/>

Uncle Fred’s letters <http://mollyscanopy.com/2014/12/uncle-freds-letters/>
(Because they fulfill an aspiration to pass down the stories of my childless relatives.)

First blogiversary: A One-Gun Salute
<http://mollyscanopy.com/2015/04/first-blogiversary-a-one-gun-salute/>
(Because it expresses my gratitude to my ancestors for a magical journey of discovery.)

The Tiny Road Map <http://mollyscanopy.com/2014/08/the-tiny-roadmap/>
(Because it reveals how the smallest scrap of evidence can unlock an ancestor’s history.)

Killer knapsack <http://mollyscanopy.com/2014/07/killer-knapsack/>

Irritable heart <http://mollyscanopy.com/2014/07/irritable-heart/>
(Because they synthesized hours of fascinating research into my Civil War ancestor’s war-related illness.)

What do you enjoy most about doing genealogy?

“I most enjoy the ever evolving sense of identity that comes from learning about my family’s history. Every new discovery about an ancestor – and how their personal story meshes with the history of the communities where they lived, worked, raised families and participated in civic life – adds to my increasing sense of connection to a broad, extended family with varied and interesting roots.”

Where do you get your inspiration for your blog posts?

“Everywhere! Of course family history research discoveries provide the framework on which the blog posts are built. But I also do additional historical reading and research on the places my ancestors lived (some of which I have visited), the types of work they did, the lives of women during particular eras, newspaper articles on more

contemporary ancestors, and the social, economic and political developments that occurred during their lifetimes. Drawing on all of these resources, my ancestors' stories begin to emerge – and there often turns out to be quite a bit to tell. I also find that selecting a photo or two for each blog post before I begin to write helps me visualize the focus for that post.”

What other genealogy blogs inspire you?

“I follow [Geneabloggers](#), which is a tremendous asset to the entire family history blogging community, and visit the new and blogiversary blogs publicized there for inspiration. I also follow [The Legal Genealogist](#) and [Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter](#).”

What is on your genealogy bucket list?

“Writing a family history book; visiting some of the countries, and hometowns, where my immigrant ancestors grew up; digitizing my family's huge photo archive; and inspiring other family historians to write about their ancestors' lives.”

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Please take a moment and visit Molly's blog [Molly's Canopy](#). Leave her a comment to let her know you stopped by. Thank-you Molly for sharing your blog and your thoughts with us!

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Michelle Ganus Taggart lives in Kaysville, Utah, where she enjoys the beautiful outdoors, time with family and researching her ancestors. She shares her passion for her southern research in her blog, [A Southern Sleuth](#). Are you a genealogy blogger who would like to be interviewed for the “May I Introduce To You . . .” series? If so, contact Michelle via email shelltag1@gmail.com