

You've come a long way, Baby!

We used to see advertisements for Virginia Slim Cigarettes with the caption, "*You've Come a Long Way, Baby*" – attempting, I presume, to link the product to the emancipation of the female gender.

Nowhere is a phase of that emancipation better illustrated than in the records of St. Matthew's Church. In the 1930s and 1940s and before, the ladies were invariably identified by their husbands' names only (*i.e.*, Mrs. John Smith). The fact that her name may have been Mary Jane Smith did not seem to matter. Surprisingly, I think, this applied even in the detailed records of the Women's Working Society!

Even more extreme, in many of our Burial Records, the deceased would be (in this example) simply identified as Mrs. John Smith. Presumably she had her own name through life, but in death, she frequently lost her identity – and so, unfortunately, has history!

So in this present age of enlightenment, ladies, you have indeed come a long, long way! Here's to the memory of Mary Jane Smith!

Bill MacLennan, Church Archivist