

Chapter 6: *Research in Extended Generations*

Many members feel prompted by the Spirit to continue to do research beyond the first few generations. This involves searching in original sources, many of which are available in FamilySearch Centers.

Research for Difficult to Find Ancestors

Members of the Church are counseled to prayerfully seek for their kindred dead, focusing their efforts on those whose names are readily available.

Don't forget the powerful influence the Spirit can have in helping you to identify your ancestors. As you exercise faith, names and information thought to be unavailable may come to you in unexpected ways and places. If you are not able to find information about an ancestor, be patient. In the meantime, ask the Lord to direct your attention to other ancestors whose information is more accessible (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1993, 4).

However, those ancestors whose names are difficult to find also need temple ordinances. So that they may receive them, many members and nonmembers have been prompted by the Spirit to do research beyond readily accessible generations. Doing research for difficult-to-find ancestors is described in *A Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1993) as an additional "opportunity to serve."

What you do and how much you do at a particular time depends on guidance from the Spirit, your circumstances and abilities, what your family members have already accomplished, and direction from Church leaders (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1993, 6).

This, and the following two chapters of the syllabus, will introduce you to family history research in original sources. As you learn more about this research, you are encouraged to seek guidance from the Lord and listen to the promptings of the Spirit regarding what extended research you should do.

I believe the youth are not only willing and able to do genealogical research, but they are a good means of giving life to the whole program. How often have the youth actually been driven away by those who would close the door on genealogy to them, or at the best, insist that they must "drink milk" when they are ready for the "meat" (Benson 1988, 163).

Genealogy is not alone for the old but for the young as well. Young minds are keen and alert and resourceful, all of which is needed for research (Smith 1962, 66).

I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. You are sons and daughters of God, children of the covenant, and builders of the kingdom. You need not wait until you reach an arbitrary age to fulfill your responsibility to assist in the work of salvation for the human family. . . . I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah (Bednar 2011).

Of course, the major reason why we do research is to provide ordinances for the dead.

. . . We are carrying forward a mighty undertaking of family history research so that a work of redemption might go forward in behalf of millions who have passed beyond the veil of death (Hinckley 1993, 75).

In addition to providing temple ordinances for more of your ancestors, extended family history research helps you become intimately acquainted with them. You may also find enough information to write a history of your family.

One of the most thrilling results of being involved in family research and genealogical research is becoming intimately acquainted with our ancestors—their challenges and achievements—and then showing our gratitude by performing for them the ordinances that will allow them to obtain the greatest of all gifts—the gift of eternal life (Haight 1991, 77).

I seriously doubt that you will ever turn your own heart more to your own fathers than by writing your family history. You must know a lot about them before you can write it. This will lead you to much in depth research. I promise you will love them when you become acquainted with them. They were noble people, and they sacrificed much to give you the heritage you have today. They deserve the best you can give them, which of course is membership in the Church and the kingdom of God and the sealing of their loved ones to them. (Rector 1981, 74).

Resources and Services of FamilySearch Centers

Family history centers are located throughout the world. Each has a basic collection of records and research publications to assist researchers. Many of the centers have the FamilySearch computer files. Most records available on microfilm or microfiche at the Family History Library may be ordered for use at the centers (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1994, 2).

The BYU Family History Library is located in the Harold B. Lee Library. As you study this chapter, you should visit this or another nearby FamilySearch Center to become familiar with their services and resources.

To your silent questions, Where should I begin? What should I do? we say, seek out those who are called to direct this work in your ward or branch. Go to your family history center and the temple. Identify those of your ancestors whose identity may be lost to human memory. Get started now, and the Lord will help you (Tingey 1991, 27).

In addition to FamilySearch Centers worldwide, the Church has established a FamilySearch Center in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City. Thousands of local residents and visitors to Salt Lake use the FamilySearch Center each year.

More and more people are becoming excited about discovering their roots, and the Church is doing its best to help them. The Church adopted the term family history to encourage this activity among all its members, especially those who might be intimidated by the word genealogy. In addition, 2,150 busy and productive family history centers have been established throughout the world. For example, the

FamilySearch Center in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building has served hundreds of thousands of visitors, at least two thirds of whom have found something in the computer file about their ancestors (Nelson 1994, 85).

Microfilm Circulation

Patrons at FamilySearch Centers use the FamilySearch Catalog (FSC) to identify records in the possession of the Family History Library. The Family History Library has a collection of over 2 million rolls of microfilms of original source materials from throughout the world. Patrons may request that microfilm copies of records they would like to search be sent to the center. A small circulation fee is charged. Microfilms must remain in the center for use until they are returned to the Family History Department.

Reference Collection

Most FamilySearch Centers have a collection of reference materials in book, microfilm, and microfiche format. These include finding aids (e.g., indexes) and sources that provide background information (e.g., maps and gazetteers). When you use a center, you should become familiar with the reference tools for the locality you are researching. Some of the key reference tools you should be aware of are:

Directories: Sources that list names and addresses in alphabetical order. They often list all adult residents of a city or area, or all residents that have telephones.

Gazetteers: Sources that list geographical localities in alphabetical order, and give brief descriptions. A gazetteer is a geographical dictionary.

Indexes: Sources that list key genealogical information in alphabetical order, such as census indexes.

Inventories, Registers, Catalogs Descriptions of the holdings of repositories, such as libraries.

Maps: Sources that show geographic boundaries and features. Various types of maps are used in family history research, including:

- Political maps that show national, state, county or other political boundaries.
- Plat maps that show property boundaries.
- Topographic maps that show physical and manmade features.
- Land ownership or “cadastral” maps that show the names of land owners in an area.

- Atlases: Historical atlases may show boundaries, migration routes, settlement patterns, military campaigns, Native American reservations, etc., for a period of history.
- Research
Outlines: Brief guides prepared by the Family History Department that describe the major sources and reference materials available for the United States, each individual state, and many foreign countries.
- Guides,
Textbooks: Sources that explain the key principles and procedures of how to do genealogical research. Textbooks for a given geographic area will also explain sources for that locality.

Ask a FamilySearch Center specialist to show you what reference materials are available. FamilySearch Centers also have other books and compact discs.

Research Help

FamilySearch Center specialists can help you begin identifying your ancestors. When you start doing research in the center, ask the specialist what resources and services are available to help you. Some specialists may have background in research sources and procedures for the specific locality you are searching, or they may know of genealogists in the community who are willing to answer your questions and give suggestions. Even if there is little help available locally, you can still find answers to research questions by completing a Reference Questionnaire. The FamilySearch Center will send it to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.

Family history centers operate worldwide to permit access to our vast record resources. You will find them staffed with sensitive, understanding volunteers who want to help. Through research guides, telefax, and correspondence, these centers are fortified by the impressive capabilities of the Salt Lake City Family History Library (Scott 1990, 6).

FamilySearch

We know that God our Father is our greatest teacher, and nothing that we might read or hear should quicken our attention like His instructions and counsel. These marvelous new technological developments have been revealed in this dispensation in greater fulness and greater plainness than ever before in the history of the world as far as we know so that his purposes might be speedily brought to pass. The Church, in establishing family history centers, is now bringing these marvelous developments directly to you (Haight 1991, 77).

Many brilliant minds and sensitive hearts have harnessed advanced technology to provide personal computer helps to simplify family history work. Under the descriptive title of FamilySearch®, these powerful computer aided resources are now available in family history centers in the United States and Canada... (Scott 1990, 6).

Copy Services

Check to see what copy services are available at your FamilySearch Center. Many centers have equipment for making copies of microfilm and microfiche, as well as books. For a small fee, the Family History Library makes copies in its photo duplication unit for patrons who have access to microfilm readers but not copiers.

The Five-Step Research Process

As you do family history research, you will typically follow five steps. These steps, taken in sequence, are called the “research process.” These are:

Step 1: Identify What You Know about Your Family

This step includes recording what you already know about your family, gathering additional information from home sources and relatives, and organizing your records for easy access. (Links to organizational documents can be found in Appendix C.)

Step 2: Decide What You Want to Learn About Your Family

This step involves selecting a specific ancestor about whom you would like to know more, determining what you would like to know about that ancestor, and preparing a research log.

Step 3: Select Records to Search

This step involves identifying the category of record you need to search to find out what you would like to know. This record category might be a *compiled record*, an *original record*, or a reference source. The step then involves identifying the specific record to be searched next, and describing it in your research log.

Step 4: Obtain and Search the Record

This step involves obtaining the record from the Family History Library, or another repository, searching it, and recording the results of the search on your log. You may also make an extract or photocopy of that information.

Step 5: Use the Information

This step includes submitting names for temple ordinances, submitting information to Pedigree Resource File, posting information on the Internet, writing family histories, sharing information with other family members and other uses of the information.

More complete information about the five-step research process is provided in *A Guide to Research* from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1994).

Two Types of Family History Sources

Sources of genealogical information about ancestors can be divided into two basic categories: compiled

records and original records. Examples of compiled sources are Ancestral File and other genealogy computer databases (such as those found on the Internet), compiled genealogies (such as printed family histories), and biographies. Examples of original sources are birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, census records, church records, and diaries.

Compiled records are:

Records of previous research on individuals and families already done by others, such as family histories, biographies, or genealogies with pedigree charts and family group records. Though compiled records are very helpful, some information may be inaccurate or incomplete.... Always carefully evaluate the information you find (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1994, 5).

Original records are:

Created at the time of important events in your ancestors' lives. For example, a local Church or the local government may have recorded your ancestors' births, christenings, marriages, and burials (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1994, 5).

When doing genealogical research, you should check compiled sources first to determine what has been done by other people, then search original records. When doing genealogy, you should work from the *known* to the *unknown*.

Repositories of Family History Sources

Family history research requires the use of a variety of records that provide information about our kindred dead. Subsequent chapters will discuss many of the records available for research, and the content of those records. However, all of those records must “reside” somewhere, and in order to successfully use genealogical records, researchers must also learn about the places records are kept. The many places that house records are collectively called repositories. No one library or archive has all the records needed to locate ancestral families, so it is important to learn about the wide variety and different kinds of repositories, each with different rules and methods of access. The following are the most common repositories for North American records, as well as the records of many European countries.

Original Records Creator

Every record used in family history research was originally created by an individual, institution, organization, company or similar group. Some record creators are public organizations (such as local governments), while others are private persons or companies (such as a local funeral home). That creator may still be the custodian of the record. This is particularly the case with private organizations, where laws and regulations regarding the storage and preservation of records may not pertain. It is often useful, when seeking genealogical records, to determine who created the record of interest, and then contact that creator regarding access to the records of interest.

County Courthouse

In North America, many records of genealogical value were (and are) created at the local county level. Typically such records are housed in courthouses (and/or town halls for the six New England States). They may include land deeds, probate files, court cases, marriage records, birth and death records, and a wide variety of lesser-used records. These are the records created in the day-to-day operations of a county. They are generally considered public records, and can usually be obtained by visiting the local courthouse. Some more recent records, typically vital records, might be restricted to persons who are the subject of the records, for privacy reasons.

Archives

The primary purpose of an archive is to preserve records that have historical value. Typically, when the original record creator (usually a governmental agency, but also private organizations) determines that some of the records they created in the past are no longer needed for day-to-day operations, they seek a place to store those records, for possible future use. Usually these are the original records, such as marriage records or probate files, of government agencies. Therefore, governments at all levels (federal, state, county) establish an archival system. Working in conjunction with archivists, the record creating agency determines which ones will be kept under what conditions and for how long.

The records are then transferred to the custody of the responsible archive, but are still considered the property of the agency/organization that created the record. Usually that agency will determine who can access the records, and under what conditions. After the records have been kept for the duration of their retention plan (often 20 to 70 years) they may be destroyed, discarded, or given to another organization with interest in the materials. Some records have permanent value and are kept forever. Typically in the United States, these include land transactions, probate files, census records, vital records, immigration documents, etc.

Archives usually store records based on the way in which they were created. Often this is chronologically, so indexes are usually needed to identify records pertinent to a specific person. The records themselves, with appropriate finding aids (indexes, guides, etc.) are described in collection inventories which identify the specific record group, box, shelf, collection number or other access number(s) assigned by the archive.

Often key records are copied on microfilm (or a comparable storage media). This aids in storage space issues, helps to preserve the record, while also providing reasonable access to all persons entitled to view the records. Once microfilmed, the retention schedule may call for the original documents to be destroyed. Currently, many original records, and printed sources, are being digitized.

Libraries

Libraries are the record repository most familiar to the beginning family historian. Typically considered a "home for books," libraries are actually an incredibly designed system for sharing information. As such, they have a much different purpose than archives. Libraries primarily collect published materials,

and in today's world that includes books, magazines, journals, newspapers, some microfilm, and electronic media (CD-ROMs and DVDs). They also provide Internet access to the public.

The specific collection of a given library is determined by the audience the library serves. Most libraries are public libraries, operated by a city or county and serve the general population, including genealogists. Some public libraries, especially those serving larger populations, have excellent genealogical collections. Academic libraries (at colleges or universities) often have valuable material for family historians. Some special libraries (which may be privately funded) also have very good genealogical collections.

Among the genealogical materials at libraries, researchers will find published histories of families and localities, indexes to records, abstracts and extracts of key records (such as probate, cemetery, or tax records), periodicals, and a wide variety of reference materials. Like all the holdings of a library, these materials are described in the library's catalog, which describes material by the author, title, and subjects (content) of the publication. Most library catalogs are online.

Historical Societies

Historical societies exist for many counties, towns, and other local and state jurisdictions. These may be government or membership funded organizations whose objectives are to preserve and explore the history of the locality, or of a specific topic. They often serve as an archive for specific material pertinent to the institution's mission. The collection will also include publications, making such societies a kind of mix of both library and archive.

Publishers

Often overlooked kinds of "repositories" for genealogical material are the publishers who provide both print and/or electronic versions of significant genealogical material. While many such works are self-published (by the author), most are published by a number of small publishers who focus on family history materials. In addition to selling copies to genealogical libraries, they sell to individuals through their own catalogs, Internet sites, and vendors.

Internet

The single largest repository for genealogical material today is the Internet. As discussed in a later chapter (see chapter 16), the Internet includes a vast number of genealogical websites with a wide variety of information. Although the amount of genealogical data on the Internet continues to grow at an accelerated pace, there is still only a small percent of available genealogical records on the Internet. All of the different kinds of records found in archives and libraries may appear on the Internet, including compilations of dubious quality. However, the ease of access, through general search engines along with major and minor genealogical websites, makes the Internet one of the first repositories to search for family history information. Remember to use the Internet with caution—especially compiled genealogies. Always verify your sources.