

Following Their Footsteps: Finding Records of LDS Ancestors

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While many of our Latter-day Saint ancestors' vital statistics are likely to have been documented numerous times, and they may not need temple ordinances, learning more about their lives and movements can be both interesting and inspiring.

Record Types for LDS Research

When researching the lives of our ancestors, we need to consider the source of the record. For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there are three major creators of the records.

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Examples: membership records, unit histories, mission records, patriarchal blessings, migration or emigration records, temple records, etc.

2. Individuals during their own lifetime

Examples: Diaries, journals, genealogies, or biographies

3. Historians, family historians, or historical organizations

Examples: Family histories, biographies, Church histories, or indexes

The origin of the record is associated with the current location of the record. Church records are likely to be found at the Church History Library, while a diary could be in the possession of a descendant or in a library or archive where it was donated. Published sources could be in libraries or at homes.

Sources at home

We should begin searching in our own homes for records and then contact family members. Other relatives may have the records of your ancestors passed down in their family that you didn't know existed (e.g., diaries, photos, letters, etc.). Send out enquiries on websites such as Rootsweb or Genforum to make contact with distant cousins. New FamilySearch sometimes provides contact information for the people contributing data, and they may have records about your ancestors.

Record repositories

- **CHL:** Church History Library and Archives: 15 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150; The library catalog is available online: <http://churchhistorycatalog.lds.org>
- **FHL:** Family History Library: 35 North West Temple, Salt Lake City 84150; www.familysearch.org—search the Family History Library Catalog for available records
- **HBLL:** Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library in Provo, Utah 84602 (including Family History Library and Special Collections); www.lib.byu.edu
- **UofU:** University of Utah Marriott Library, including Special Collections; www.lib.utah.edu
- Other university libraries: Utah State University, Weber State University, etc.
- Utah State Archives and Records Service: 346 South Rio Grande Street, SLC, UT 84101; www.archives.state.ut.us
- Utah State Historical Society: 300 South Rio Grande Street, SLC, UT 84101; <http://history.utah.gov>

Other Sources

Indexes and Finding Aids

- Early Church Information File—A alphabetical microfilmed card index of members from the 1830s to the mid-20th century. Held at CHL, FHL, HBLL.
- Membership Card Index, also known as the Minnie Margetts File—Indexes many early LDS Church branch and membership records (1830s to 1930s), primarily for Britain and U.S. Held at CHL, FHL, HBLL.
- Patriarchal Blessing Index—Computer database of patriarchal blessings. The index is held at the CHL, with microfilms at the FHL. Using www.lds.org (under “Tools”), you can request copies of blessings for yourself and your direct-line ancestors.
- Sperry, Kip. *A Guide to Mormon Family History Sources*. Provo, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2007. Information about a variety of records and repositories for searching.
- Jaussi, Laureen R., and Gloria D. Chaston. *Genealogical Records of Utah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974. Reference book of LDS church records and Utah records.
- Jaussi, Laureen R., and Gloria D. Chaston. *Register of LDS Church Records*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968. Includes listing of film numbers at FHL for wards and branches.
- Bitton, Davis. *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977. Descriptions of autobiographies, journals, and diaries and where they are located in archives and special collections. Not complete and now it is outdated.

Published and Compiled Records

Many sources are available in libraries and archives in and around Utah, although some are digitized and on the Internet. In the short list below, if the sources are available at certain libraries or archives, it will be noted (see the list of record repositories above for abbreviations). If they are available on the internet, the URL will be included.

- *Journal History of the Church*, with an index—Consists of typescripts, newspaper clippings, and other sources of daily events relating to the Church since 1830. Held at CHL, FHL, HBLL, UofU. The index is now available on the Church History Library website: <http://churchhistorycatalog.lds.org>
- Family Group Records Collection—Church members submitted copies of their family group records beginning in 1924. They are compiled, microfilmed, and now held at FHL, HBLL.
- Newspapers and Periodicals—on microfilm in libraries throughout the area: FHL, CHL, HBLL, UofU, and other libraries. Many Utah newspapers from the 19th and 20th century are digitized and online: <http://digitalnewspapers.org/>
- Esshom, Frank. *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*. Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers Book, 1913; This book and other Utah Pioneer-related databases are online at www.ancestry.com
- Black, Susan Easton, comp. *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1848*. 50 vols. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989. Held at CHL, FHL and other libraries. On the Internet: www.worldvitalrecords.com

Original or primary sources

These records are usually created at or near the time of an event, and may be held either by family members, in record repositories, or on the Internet. These records include:

- Church Census Records from 1914 to 1960—The Church took censuses of its members for several years. Held in CHL, FHL, HBLL on microfilm.

- Journals, Diaries, and other personal accounts—donated to various libraries and archives, including CHL, FHL, HBLL, UofU. Some diaries having to do with the pioneer trail are on the internet at <http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu>.
- Membership Records—ward and branch records may include genealogical information, along with ordinance and priesthood ordination dates. Organized by ward or branch name. On microfilm and available at CHL, with many microfilms also held in the FHL and HBLL.
- Minutes of Meetings—minutes of branch, ward, and stake meetings. Held at the CHL
- Branch, Ward, Stake, and Mission histories—held at the CHL.
- Temple Records—Temple ordinance dates are available at new.familysearch.org, but some original records have been microfilmed and are available at CHL, FHL, HBLL. These include Nauvoo temple records and the Temple Records Index Bureau (TIB) which indexes endowments prior to 1970.

Migration, Emigration, and Immigration

Records of emigration and immigration contain information about early Latter-day Saints' origins, travels, and their lives in their final destinations. Most original records are held at the CHL with some copies or microfilms at the FHL. Search the catalogs for CHL and FHL. In addition, historical and pioneer societies have gathered first-hand accounts or other records about pioneers and migration. Many of these records are available at other repositories (such as university libraries) or online:

- Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1848-1868 –Database with individuals who traveled in LDS pioneer companies: <http://lds.org/churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch/>
- Trails of Hope: Overland Diaries and Letters, 1846-1849: <http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/>
- Daughters of the Utah Pioneers and Pioneer Memorial Museum: 300 North Main Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84103, with pioneer records and memorabilia: www.dupinternational.org
- Mormon Migration website—Database with all known ships' passenger lists of Latter-day Saints, along with journal accounts and other information about the voyages: <http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration/>
- Mormon Trails Association: <http://mormontrails.org/>

Other Internet Sources

Ancestry.com and worldvitalrecords.com, along with other subscription sites have digitized collections of publications, indexes and other records of Latter-day Saints.

Other websites of interest include:

- Online resource guide for Mormon material, including culture, history, people, and theology: <http://lib.byu.edu/sites/mormonstudies/>
- Mormons and Their Neighbors. Indexes biographies and published histories with call numbers for the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU: <http://lib.byu.edu/digital/Ancestry/>
- Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections: <http://lib.byu.edu/digital/>
- BYU HBLL Historical Photographs: http://lib.byu.edu/digital/historic_photos/
- Cemetery Burials Database—Utah: http://history.utah.gov/research_and_collections/cemeteries/index.html
- Community of Christ Library and Archives: <http://cofchrist.org/library/>
- Utah Death Certificates, 1905-1954: <http://archives.utah.gov/research/indexes/index.html>