Research Logs

This handout explains the importance of research logs and how these logs can be used in family history research.

What Is a Research Log?

A research log is a record you keep of your family history research and the results of your efforts. Research logs are an important tool for organizing your family history research.

You can use a standard printed research log form available from Church Distribution Services (item 31825), or you can create your own form (see a sample log on the last page of this handout). You can also use a computer to keep your research logs.

How a Research Log Can Help You

You should always keep a research log when you do research. Document your efforts on a log as you do the research, not after. Documentation speeds further research, and lack of it leads to frustration.

A research log will help you do the following:

- Keep track of what you have already done, and avoid duplicating steps.
- Plan your research strategy and identify your questions.
- Document your sources. This will improve the quality of your research.
- Sort out what you have found and what you still need to find.
- Organize copies of documents you have found.
- Weigh your evidence and make better conclusions.

The information you include on the log can help you or someone else retrace your research steps, if needed, to verify or review information you found. A research log is the foundation for future research, by you or by others.

What to Include on a Research Log

A good research log will contain the following kinds of information:

- The purpose for checking each source (what you hope to find).
- A summary of what you have found.
- Notes on sources that did not contain what you were hoping to find.
- Comments about your search strategies, questions, and any discrepancies in the sources.

Use one research log for each family you research. Do not try to maintain one log that contains the information for all families you are researching.

Include the following information on your research logs:

- **Ancestor's name** and time period. For example: "William FRAZIER, 1826-1881"
- **Your name.**
- **Source** you plan to search.
- **Date** you searched the source.
- **Place** where you searched the source. Include the mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address, or Internet URL.
- **Purpose** for your search. This includes the name of the person and

the event you are searching for. For example: William Frazier, baptism. You also can use symbols to represent events, such as: * (baptism); ∞ (marriage); or † (death).

- **Call number** of the source. This is the library or archive call number, such as: FHL book 977.192D3d.
- **Source description.** This includes the author and title of the source, the publisher and date of publication, and the page in the source where you found your information. This descriptive information can be found in a catalog entry for the source. Write the information on your research log before you find the source. Include on your log all the information needed so you or someone else can find the source again. Write the information in footnote format. For help in using footnote format, you can consult a good style guide such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- **Document number**. Assign a sequential number to each document you find. For example: "William FRAZIER, 1826-1881, 9."
- **Results** of your search. List the name and the event found. You can use the same symbols you used in the purpose portion of the log. If you do not find the information, you can simply write "nil" to indicate that you found nothing.

File Research Logs

File a copy of the log with the information you have organized for each family you are researching. If you use a computer to keep your logs, print a copy, and file it each time you have updated a log.

Ways to organize family information:
- File folders.
    - On the file tab, write the name of the husband, his birth and death years, and wife's name and years.
    - Keep folders in alphabetical order by the last name of the husband.
- Three-ring binder notebooks
    - File each part of your pedigree into separate binders.
    - Separate each family in each binder with divider tabs that show the husband's and wife's names.
    - Keep families in alphabetical order within each binder.

Ancestors were part of two families, one as a child, and one as a parent.

Record and file family information in the following way:
- Events before marriage are recorded on the father's research log, and documents are filed in the father's folder or binder.
- Events after marriage are recorded on the husband's research log, and documents are filed in the husband's folder or binder.

Some sources include information about multiple families.
- Select the predominant family. Place the document in that family's folder or binder.
- Number the document sequentially with the other documents in the family's folder or binder.
- Write the number on the back of the document copy.

- Record the source on all applicable research logs, including those for the other families that appear in the document.

You do not need to redo or reorganize all of your family history information. Do not be discouraged if your research logs or files are not perfect. As you gain experience, your logs and files will improve.

Research Log

Ancestor: William FRAZIER (1826-1881)   Researcher: G. David Dilts

Date	PLACE OF RESEARCH / Mailing Address	PURPOSE / Seeking what?	CALL NUMBER	SOURCE. Books: Author, title, publication place, publisher, publ. date, page(s). Periodicals: + vol. , date, issue #.	DOCUMENT NUMBER	RESULTS
8 May 2001	Robert G. FRAZIER Telephone (...)	✱ Robert P.		Robert G. Frazier, Wichita, Kans, 8 May 2001, telephone conversation with G. David Dilts, Salt Lake City, Utah		nil
11 May 2001	Family History Library 35 N West Temple St. SLC UT 84150-3400	∞ Wm. FRAZIER Marg. DENTON		Ancestral File [online database] (Salt Lake City: Geneal. Soc. of Utah, 1998). William FRAZIER 1826	William FRAZIER 1826-1881 8	✱∞†8 family of Wm.
11 May 2001	''	∞ Wm. FRAZIER Nancy McCLURE		International Gen. Index [online database] (Salt Lake City: Gen. Soc. of Utah, 1993, 2000), North America 2000 Addendum, Marr. Search	William FRAZIER 1826-1881 9	∞ of Wm. & Nancy
	''	Wm. FRAZIER family group	1274092	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Genealogical Society. Family Group Records Collection, Archives Section 1942-1969. (SLC: GSU, 1977.)		
1 Jun 2001	''	1860 age of Robert	976.8 X225 1860 1597916 it.3	Byron Sistler. 1860 Census - Tennessee. (Nashville: Byron Sistler & Assoc., 1981-1982). V. 2, p. 244	William FRAZIER 1826-1881 10	census: Robert in 1860

Sample Research Log