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St. Petersburg Branch Library

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WHERE TO FIND YOUR ROOTS IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA (PART 2)

By Marjorie E. Hazel

In the last issue of the *Tampa Bay History*, Phyllis Belnap gave a factual accounting of the Latter-Day Saint Branch Genealogical Library in Tampa. When the article was written, the Tampa Branch was the only one available in the Tampa Bay area. Since then several changes have taken place which precipitate this article.

The St. Petersburg Branch Genealogical Library became the 341st branch to join the ever-increasing network of Mormon Genealogical Libraries throughout the world. The St. Petersburg Branch Library is located in the church at 570 62nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg, but all mail should be addressed to: P. O. Box 20962, Gateway Mall Station, St. Petersburg, FL 33742. This library like all others belonging to the Mormon Church is open to the public. Library hours are: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Thursdays 9 a.m.-9 p.m., closed Fridays; Saturdays 9 a.m.-noon except on the fourth Saturday when the Florida Society for Genealogical Research holds its meeting at the church from 2 to 4 p.m. You can call (813) 525-9351 for an appointment. Dorothy Boyer is at the library on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to help check DAR, Mayflower, and lineages for other organizations.

The new branch library held a free seminar on April 26 when approximately 250 people showed up to learn how to use the facilities and tour the library. Since then 270 patrons have taken advantage of the six microfilm and three microfiche readers. The 1978 updated Computer File Index was purchased prior to the library's opening and has been one of the library's most popular assets. By the end of July, the microfilm cabinet held about 120 films which were placed there on indefinite loan and another 40 films on a six month loan. Here on a two week loan are over 100 films which can be obtained by anyone using the library even though they were ordered for another patron. Cherry colored cards in the card catalog indicate a microfilm which has been placed in the library on an indefinite loan. These are mostly indexes to probate records, grantee and grantor indexes, vital records and other primary source records. Six month loans are denoted with a red dot on the film box and a red date indicating when the film is to be returned to Salt Lake.

The indefinite loans are mainly from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Iowa with a few from New York, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Vermont, Maine, Illinois. These also include a few family histories. In addition to the English speaking countries listed in the card catalog, you will find Germany, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Austria, Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cypress, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland and Iceland. Records from other countries can be ordered if needed by a patron.

The St. Petersburg branch has a card catalog file of other Florida libraries and their genealogical holdings which was started by the Florida Society for Genealogical Research. We try to keep up to date on the changes of address and library hours, and we have a notebook with the current changes in state law that affect the opening or closing of public records to the genealogist. We are keeping a card file on vital records that appear in periodicals in our library.

Due to limited book space, we are trying not to duplicate books that are available in nearby libraries. Along with the genealogical materials that belong to the branch library, you will find many books and periodicals belonging to the Florida Society for Genealogical Research whose board of directors voted to house permanently its collection in the branch library. The Society, too, has many donations from its membership which help in researching your family tree.

The library sells duplicate copies of periodicals and books which have been donated and purchases other materials it does not have with the proceeds. At present there are for sale several years of *Genealogical Helper*, *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, *New England Historical and Genealogical Quarterly*, *DAR Magazine*, *Maryland Genealogical Society Quarterly* and a great many Florida city directories all published in the 1970s. Prices vary according to the condition of the material.

As a learning experience for patrons, the St. Petersburg Branch Library holds an annual Genealogy Seminar. This year's seminar was held at the church on October 25th. It was an all-day affair and participants had a choice of five class periods and a selection of over thirty different subjects. The nominal fee this year included a genealogical packet for all who attended and contained all of the hand-outs from each instructor. Every year capacity crowds have attended.

The branch library provides free consultation on research problems but only to the extent of the knowledge of the personnel in that branch. We can ask for a limited amount of help from the main library in Salt Lake City through a Library Reference Questionnaire. As with all branch libraries, our librarians are volunteers and do not do your research for you, but they will try to guide you to do it yourself. The fun of tracing your family tree is doing it yourself anyway!

In the Spring/Summer 1980 issue of *Tampa Bay History*, we stated that the Tampa Branch Library had printouts of English Parish Registers. Because of shelf space, its librarian, Barbara Dalby, chose to give these printouts to the St. Petersburg Branch Library. Other recent acquisitions include several years of three Ohio quarterlies, as well as some from Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Virginia and Indiana. The library through a memorial gift has purchased the five volumes of *Local Histories in the Library of Congress*. This is a bibliography of county and state histories arranged by geographical location. These volumes are a companion piece to the Tampa Branch's *Family Histories in the Library of Congress*. These reference works let you know a book exists even though you cannot (except in very rare circumstances) borrow it from the Library of Congress on international library loan. However, if you cannot locate another copy anywhere and it is beyond the copyright date (or you can get written permission from the publisher or author), you can have it photocopied or microfilmed at the U. S. Government's prevailing prices for photoduplicating.

The microfilmed card catalog from the Genealogical Department of the Mormon Church has a set of fifty-two films that covers its vast collection of filmed family histories. The main library has thousands of family histories that are in book form only, and these are also listed in the card catalog; however, the latter cannot be borrowed. If a book was published before 1906, the branch library can request that it be microfilmed and sent to us at the usual fee. Family histories are not

kept in the branch library on an indefinite loan because of their limited usage, but a six month loan is available so you can make copies.

Here are some handy hints to use effectively the branch library. First, you should fill out your pedigree chart and then make a separate family group sheet for each couple on the pedigree chart. If you do not have forms, they can be purchased for a few cents at the library. A good supply of several sizes and types of genealogical forms are kept for the convenience of the patrons, as well as many good "How To" books. These forms make it easier to survey your problem so we can direct you to possible sources.

Next, check the C. F. L (Computer File Index - now called International Genealogical Index) to see if any of your progenitors have been submitted or extracted on this 64 million name file. To use this file, you need only know the name and in what state or country a person was born. An individual must be deceased to appear in this file. If you are fortunate enough to find a few names, you will want to send a photoduplication order for copies of the entries that were submitted by a member of the Mormon Church. If the reference number is preceded by a letter, this is a church extraction program, and there is no follow-up for the source. It is usually a book or microfilm from the main library. There is a small fee for this service. When you receive the photocopy, you then write to the person whose name and address appears in the upper left hand corner of the form. Since this computer file began in 1969, most of the people are still alive and will answer your request. They may have more information to share with you.

After you have determined what has or has not been put on the Computer File, you will then use the microfilmed card catalog for the states or countries where your ancestors lived. From this you will select records that might help you with your research problems. Many different genealogical records have been filmed, but one of the first categories you should check is "Vital Records." This will confirm birth dates, marriage dates and death or burial dates you may have gotten from other sources. In some localities it will be town records that need to be consulted, in other places the county will have jurisdiction over the records. Do not fail to check the state archives and local historical societies because many early records have been placed there after they were no longer required in the originating archives. Even if you think you know your information is correct, look at the official records - you may be surprised at what they reveal. How about a grandmother who died three months before she was born? Her death certificate says so! The one in the county did anyway, but the one in the state office showed the correct date. You may even find your own birth certificate is inaccurate - I did!

But what if the courthouse burned down? This happened not only in the South, courtesy of Sherman's march to the sea, but Yankee courthouses suffered the same fate. Do not believe it when you are told, "All our records burned in the fire." There must be some reconstructed records, otherwise the county could not operate. They could not even tax people without knowing who owns what. Do you think they are going to wait until the taxpayer brings the money in? Not likely! Sometimes through the vast microfilming program of the LDS Church, you can have access to the original records. One of our librarians was told in a New England town that the records did not exist - but they were on the Mormon list of microfilms - and they were microfilmed copies of the originals that were supposedly lost. Although the old handwritten ones are much harder to read than typed abstracts, nothing is better than the primary entry. After

finding the appropriate record on the film, send for a certified copy of it by citing the volume and page number.

Indexes to probates, estate records, land entries and vital records help you order the right rolls of film. Land records do not always give genealogical data, but they do confirm your ancestors living in a certain locality at a specific time period. Many "stone walls" in genealogy are errors of location and come tumbling down when you start looking in the right place at the right time. Do not be too narrow-minded in your search, because your ancestors moved around a great deal more than we give them credit for. A search of surrounding counties will many times turn up additional records you did not expect.

We have a great many patrons in our library who are doing foreign research. Before you are ready to cross the Atlantic, you need to search the records in the county where your ancestor lived AFTER he or she came over on the boat. These records will probably be more fruitful than passenger lists. If you are lucky enough to know exactly where your foreign ancestors were born, you can use the card catalog, remembering that when the records arrive they will be written in THEIR language and not English. You may have to purchase a dictionary in that language or have someone translate the records. Our library is keeping a file of persons who are able to read foreign languages. Remember, in many countries Latin was the language written in records, especially Catholic Church records.

In addition to vital records kept by the city and county, there are church baptism and burial records. Churches also record marriages performed, while marriage bonds, applications, and licenses remain in the county offices. Cemeteries' and sextons' records, morticians' records and tombstone inscriptions can be used side by side. The key to successful research is to make a list of all those persons who would be interested in a certain event. They might include eye-witnesses, friends, family, and those responsible for keeping official records.

People in the Tampa Bay area who live part-time in the North can use a branch library while there. We have a list of libraries to consult. Patrons can order microfilms ahead of time by writing to our P. O. Box about a month before they return, and then their films will probably arrive at home soon after they do. It usually takes a month to receive a film from the main archives. However, to avail yourself of this service, you must consult the card catalog ahead of time and send us the film number, the film title and locality, along with a check for \$2.10 for each film ordered. Even though the Mormon Church may not have microfilmed the records you need, it may have them scheduled for future copying. By using a Library Reference Questionnaire, you can see if there have been any added since the card catalog was filmed. Do not just visit the branch library once and then give up. Persistence pays off in the end.

One other word of advice. Not all the films that have been microfilmed are available for use in the branch library. Some are restricted by state laws, some are restricted by the archive where they were filmed, and some will be released for public use at a later time. The Genealogical Department in Salt Lake City keeps all contractual agreements and does not knowingly violate any restrictions or copyrights. So be patient if your area of research is restricted. Try to change the laws to make public records more accessible, and please do not gripe at those who are obeying the law.

Learn what records will or will not help you, what you can expect to get from various records, and where they might be located. Consult your local colleges for genealogy classes to help you learn effective research. Building a family tree requires certain skills, so the more prepared you are, the less likely your tree is to be uprooted by mistaken research.

We invite all readers to come visit our Branch Library and watch us grow!

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following facilities contain additional information for genealogical researchers.

CLEARWATER PUBLIC LIBRARY - 100 North Osceola Avenue (462-6800)

The library has a good card file selection on genealogy, and it houses substantial research material. Genealogy books are kept mainly in the reference section. Ample tables and chairs are provided for research. The library furnishes an interlibrary loan system to retrieve material from the State Library in Tallahassee and federal census data through NARS. There are two microfilm readers, one reader-printer, and a copying machine available.

DUNEDIN PUBLIC LIBRARY - 223 Douglas Avenue (733-4115)

Monday-Wednesday 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The library has a good selection of "how-to-do-it" books, but is limited in research materials. Reference materials are to be used at the library and do not circulate. There is an excellent research area containing a microfiche reader, but there is no microfilm reader. A copying machine is available. Librarians have bibliographies and supplements, and they are most willing and helpful with research suggestions.

FORT MYERS PUBLIC LIBRARY - 2310 Edwards Drive (334-3992)

Monday and Thursday 9:00 a.m. -9:00 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

The genealogical section is very limited, but a grant will be spent to increase the collection. Books are gathered on the porch area with a microfilm reader readily accessible. The library has a loan arrangement with Tallahassee and with NARS at East Point, Georgia. Microfilm and books can be ordered for the cost of postage.

MANATEE PUBLIC LIBRARY - 1301 Baccarota Blvd., Bradenton (748-5555)

Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Eaton Room: Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

This facility currently has varied but limited resources. In addition to genealogical lists in the card catalogue, there is a special file and an exchange file with the Sarasota Library. The Manatee County Genealogical Society meets at the library and has donated books. Librarians will furnish the names of Society members. Genealogical items are housed in the Eaton Room on the second floor.

NEW PORT RICHEY PUBLIC LIBRARY - 302 East Main Street (849-2179) Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.; Thursday, Friday,

Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

The library has a very limited collection, but it does contain many books on Scottish ancestry. Genealogy books are kept in the reference section and do not circulate. There is an interlibrary loan service for residents of Pasco County with validated library cards. This facility has one microfilm and two microfiche readers. In addition a copying machine is available.

PINELLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Heritage Park, 11909125th St. N., Largo, Florida 33540

In the fall of 1979, the Pinellas County Historical Society launched a project dealing with genealogy in Pinellas County. A committee was formed, headed by Leonard Smith, a professional, certified genealogist, to handle the authenticity of the research material collected. Bob Harris, Research Historian of the Pinellas County Historical Museum at Heritage Park, will be coordinating the project.

Any individual or couple who moved to Pinellas County and has lived here since 1930, or were born prior to 1930 and subsequently had a family is urged to participate in the project. When the information is verified, it goes on a computer with the print-outs going into the archives at the museum. As of October 1, 1980, 175 names have been computerized.

Instructions and forms are sent upon request by either calling or writing Bob Harris at Heritage Park, 448-2474. Packets can also be picked up at Heritage Park.

POLK COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY - 495 North Hendry, Bartow (533-5146)

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Closed last Friday of each month.

This is probably the best genealogical library of southern records in the southeastern United States. It has a huge number of sources on Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Florida. The holdings contain official records of the Civil War, DAR lineage books, magazines, and many family histories from various states. Books are arranged by state and location. The library has deeds, cemetery records, court records, parish records, newspaper clippings, and periodicals. In addition, it has early land records, wills and censuses. There are two microfilm readers available to researchers.

ST. PETERSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY - 3745 9th Avenue North (893-7724)

Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

The card catalogue is extensive and large numbers of research materials are available. Genealogy records are on the second floor, and there are three desks to work at. The library has numerous periodicals and quarterlies, and will order items on loan, charging for postage only.

SELBY PUBLIC LIBRARY - 1001 Blvd. of the Arts, Sarasota (366-7303)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Wednesday and Saturday 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

This lovely new building has a card catalogue file box and many periodicals. The shelves are closed and access to them requires the assistance of a librarian. Volunteers are often available to

assist in research. The library will order books and microfilm on loan, and there are two microfilm and two microfiche readers available.

TAMPA PUBLIC LIBRARY - 900 North Ashley Street (223-8945)

Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The genealogy section is on the second floor. The library has excellent "how-to-do-it" books as well as general and specific materials. The card catalogue is extensive. The library houses the holdings of the Florida Genealogical Society consisting of published data, books, and personal donations of family histories, journals, and genealogies. This facility has a loan service with Tallahassee, NARS, and the Ohio State University system. The library provides a large number of microfilm readers, and a copying machine is available for duplicating microfilm.