Chapter 6-Gathering information from public records
More than your own strength
Once you have gathered and recorded the family history information readily available from your home and family, you may need to search public records to find more information.
"After you find the first few generations, the road will become more difficult. . . . You will be tempted to stop and leave the hard work of finding to others who are more expert or to another time in your life. But you will also feel a tug on your heart to go on in the work, hard as it will be.

President Henry B. Eyring
As your research becomes more challenging

“As you decide, remember that the names which will be so difficult to find are of real people to whom you owe your existence in this world and whom you will meet again in the spirit world. . . . Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands. You will have more than your own strength as you choose to labor on to find them.”

Public records to search
There are many kinds of public records that you can search.

- Governments and churches often keep records of specific life events.
These records may record events that occurred hundreds of years ago

In many cases the records were very carefully maintained
Public records to search: Vital records

Vital records often contain the dates and places which are important for temple ordinances.

Types of records include:
- Births
- Marriages
- Deaths
Public records to search: Vital records

Vital records are usually found in government offices and churches near the places where your ancestors lived.
Public records to search: Vital records

In some countries, vital records are also called civil registration records.
Census records are a rich source of information about individuals and families.
Public records to search: Census records

These records often list:
- Names
- Ages
- Relationships
- Birthplaces
- Occupations
Thousands of census records have been filmed and made available for easy use on the Internet and in family history centers throughout the world.
Immigration records were created when an individual or a family arrived in a new country.
Public records to search: Immigration records

These records are helpful in finding:

- Names and birthplaces of family members
- Dates of arrival in the new country
Public records to search: Immigration records

Many collections of immigration records can be found on the Internet and in family history centers throughout the world.
Newspapers may include articles about your ancestors and often include obituaries announcing the deaths of local citizens.
Obituaries often contain valuable details about a person, including:

- Birthplace
- Birth date
- Family members
- Religion
- Burial
Church records may provide information not available in other types of records.
Public records to search: Church records

Churches often kept records (when local governments did not) of:

- Births
- Marriages
- Deaths
Public records to search: Church records

These records can play an important role in your search for family information
Public records to search: Cemetery records

Cemetery records, such as tombstone and sexton records, may give:

- Birth and death dates
- Age at death
- Name of spouse
- Names of children
- Maiden names
Public records to search: Cemetery records

Tombstones may have symbols or insignia suggesting:
- Military service
- Social affiliation
- Fraternal affiliation
- Religious affiliation
Gathering information from public records
Pray for guidance

You will have many choices to make, including:
- Choices about which ancestors to focus on
- What information to look for
- What records to search
- Where to obtain those records
Pray for guidance

Ask the Lord to guide you and help you make the right decisions

#1
Choose an ancestor

You will be most effective if you focus on gathering information about a single ancestor or family.
Choose an ancestor

You may also want to identify the specific event about which you want to seek:
- Birth
- Death
- Marriage
Use the record selection table

If necessary, ask your family history consultant for help

#3
Find the record

Visit or contact the place where the record is kept
Find the record

Visit or contact place where record is kept:
- Visit in person
- Write
- Call
- E-mail
- Use the Internet to inquire about the records
Find the record

Useful records could be stored in:
- Family history centers
- Libraries
- Archives
- Churches
- Courthouses
- Internet sites
Find the record: Family history centers

- The Church has microfilmed public records from all over the world
Digital images of many of these records can be viewed online at:

www.familysearch.org
Some of these records are available only on microfilm
Find the record: Family history centers

- You can order copies of these microfilms at a family history center for a small fee
- Use the films at the center for several weeks at a time
Ordering films from a family history center is an easy and less-expensive way to search through record collections without having to travel long distances.
Find the record: Internet sites

- Your family history consultant may be able to recommend Internet sites for you to search.
National, state, provincial, and county offices across the world publish their record collections on the Internet...
Find the record: Internet sites

- Vital record collections
- Newspapers
- Local history records
- Church records
Find the record: Internet sites

Some of these sites allow users to view their record collections at no cost
Many family history Internet sites are available at your local family history center at no cost
National, state, provincial, and county archives store records created by government organizations.
Public libraries also store many valuable records, such as newspapers and obituaries.
If you cannot find the records of your ancestors on the Internet, you may want to visit government archives or local libraries in areas where your ancestors lived.
Find the record: Archives and libraries

• Ask your family history consultant to help you plan your visits to these organizations
Keeping notes on what you find
A research log is a record of where you have looked for family history information and what you have found.
Introduction to the research log

A sample research log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location/</th>
<th>Description of source</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Doc. number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/27/04</td>
<td>FHL Film #1243,241</td>
<td>Vital records of Stillwater, Canada</td>
<td>To find if a birth record exists for James T. Lighter with his parents</td>
<td>#124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/27/04</td>
<td>NAWL Stillwater, Ontario, Canada</td>
<td>Telephone call to Rease Cally</td>
<td>Ask what his father remembers about James T. Lighter</td>
<td>#125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/29/04</td>
<td>Personal Possessions of Gloria Davison</td>
<td>Journal of James Lighter</td>
<td>James talks about his parents in detail, gives full names, along with extensive genealogy in Journal #1</td>
<td>#124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research logs help you:

- Organize your work
- Keep you and others from repeating research that has already been done
Use your research to record: **Who**

- Write the name of the person you are researching
- Write contact information for people who can help in your search
Use your research to record: What

- Record your research objectives
- Record the kinds of sources you use
- Record what you discover
- Record even if all you discover is a dead end
Use your research to record: Where

- Record the location or call number for each source
- Record the places where events occurred in the lives of your ancestors
Use your research to record: When

- Include the date when you use a particular source
- Record the dates of important events in the lives of your ancestors

Calendars:
- July 1886
- May 1906
- March 1792
Assignments
Use the Record Selection Table in appendix C to identify a type of record that might contain additional information about an ancestor.
Assignment #2

- Contact the place where the record is kept
- You can visit the place in person, or you can write, call, e-mail, or use the Internet to inquire about the records
- See what information you find on the records
Assignment #3

- Record the results of your search in your research log (see appendix A)
- Record any new information in the FamilySearch Internet site or on paper forms
If you are taking the Temple and Family History course, prepare for the next class by reading chapter 7.
Additional Resources

- Alan E. Mann and Marvin R. Zautcke, "Family History via the Internet," Ensign, July 2000, 50-55
Additional Resources

- A Guide to Research (30971)