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FAMILY HISTORY CENTERS

Family History Centers are extensions of the FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY in Salt Lake City, Utah. The first center opened in 1964. Originally, they were known as branch genealogical libraries. When the Genealogical Library became the Family History Library in 1987, the branches became Family History Centers. In 1990 there were over 1,500 such centers in 49 countries.

Located most often in LDS stake centers, Family History Centers are open to the public, generally twenty hours per week, staffed entirely by volunteers. There is no charge, but space is often limited. At a Family History Center, researchers have access to the Family History Library's microfilm copies of family history records, which can be lent to the center for a specified time. Many local centers also have significant collections of genealogical source material on microfiche, and some have their own collections of research materials specific to their area.

At a Family History Center, patrons find many of the same research tools that are available at the central Family History Library, including microfiche editions of the Family History Library Catalog, the INTERNATIONAL GENEALOGICAL INDEX™ (IGI), the FAMILY REGISTRY™, and a series of instructional handouts that describe how to do research in the United States and many other countries. Many centers also provide access to FAMILYSEARCH™, a computer system that organizes data and simplifies the task of family history research.

Addresses of worldwide Family History Centers are available from the Family History Library.

V. BEN BLOXHAM

FAMILY HISTORY, GENEALOGY

The terms "family history" and "genealogy" are synonymous for Latter-day Saints. Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, said, "The process by which we identify our place in our eternal family is called genealogy. Genealogy is family history" (Regional Representatives Seminar, April 3, 1987). To emphasize the family nature of genealogy, the First Presidency in 1987 changed the name of the Genealogical Department to the Family History Department and the name of the Genealogical Library to the FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY.

LDS interest in family history is based on the fundamental doctrines of SALVATION, AGENCY, and EXALTATION. It is the plan of God that all persons shall have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive the saving ordinances, regardless of when they lived on earth. If they do not hear the gospel preached through the Lord's authorized servants in this life, they will hear it in the SPIRIT WORLD after death. Latter-day Saints identify their ancestors and arrange for baptism and other ordinances to be performed by proxy—that is, with a living person standing in for the deceased person—in a temple. This is not an optional function of LDS belief; it is, rather, a commandment of God. As Elder Oaks further explained, "We are not hobbyists in genealogy work. We do family history work in order to provide the ordinances of salvation for the living and the dead" (1989, p. 6; see also SALVATION OF THE DEAD).

Members of the Church were instructed in the sacred role of family history work in 1894, when President Wilford WOODRUFF declared, "We want the Latter day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to this people" (p. 543; see also SEALING). The purpose of family history, President Woodruff explained, is to obtain names and statistical data so that TEMPLE ORDINANCES can be performed in