

SAVING YOUR FAMILY BIBLE DATA

By Randy Seaver

The treasures in my mother's closet included several pages removed from family Bibles with family information on them. I have used this information in my own research, but it struck me that the information in these family records might be of use to other researchers.

I joined the National Genealogical Society (NGS – their web site is <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>) some time back, and knew that they had a project to digitize and save Bible records. Their members' web page says:

The NGS Bible Record collection is being indexed and digitized. A large percentage of the Bibles, but not all, have an every name index. The index is searchable via the Internet to members free of cost. Images of the Bible pages are being scanned in PDF format. They are available to view online by members only. When new Bibles are indexed or scanned, they are uploaded that night, and become available on-line the next day to members. Since we are working on these almost daily, people need to check back periodically.

So I wondered how I could submit my Bible pages, even though they were removed from the Bibles and therefore any provenance data was lost. I asked on the APG (Association of Professional Genealogists) mailing list and got responses from several NGS leaders and employees. They recommended (from an email from Shirley Wilcox):

We prefer a hard copy as sometimes we have had troubles getting good copies from the scans. We also appreciate a transcription and a note as to where the records are currently located. Send photocopies & transcripts to

Bible Records
National Genealogical Society
3108 Columbia Pike, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22204-4304 USA

Copies of copies are fine. This is just a little more insurance that the records will be available for future generations in case a different copy gets destroyed in a fire, flood, or something else such as someone walking off with the local society copy. Unfortunately those things do happen.

Unfortunately, the NGS Bible Records collection are in the Members Only section of the NGS web site at present; I can't argue with that since they are doing the indexing and posting, but it does limit the availability of the records. You could join NGS (the news magazine and NGS Quarterly periodical are excellent) and gain access, or you could have a current member check the Bible Records for you if you want to know if there is information on your ancestral families.

I have started making good quality copies of my Bible pages and will send them to NGS when I have completed the task. I will also transcribe the information and will include that in my "package" of data.

How about you? Do you have original (or copies) of Bible records in your research papers? Is it absolutely unique - meaning no one else has a copy of it? If so, you may want to make copies and send them to NGS for safekeeping and for sharing with other researchers.

I encourage everyone to submit their Bible Records data to NGS so that these precious and unique records will be available forever.