

USING THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY CATALOG

By Randy Seaver

Is your genealogy research stuck on "brick wall?"

One of the major tenets of genealogy research is that **you should obtain primary information from original source documents as direct evidence** in order to prove relationships - whether they are vital records, probate records, land records, military records, etc.

A second major tenet is that **all records are NOT available on the Internet (yet...)** - you have to find some of them in libraries or other repositories. The ones that are not on the Internet are likely the ones you haven't seen yet, and that you need to see.

A third major tenet is that the **Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City is one of the best genealogy repositories available**, especially for original records such as probate, land, military, court, town, etc. They have microfilmed records in every US State and County and many countries - you will be amazed at the quantity and quality of the available records. While a visit to SLC is recommended and very enjoyable and exhausting, there is another way to access these records.

Much of the original source material available at the FHL is also on microfilm, and can be ordered, read and copied at an LDS Family History Center near your locality. To determine what the Library has on microfilm, you can check the online Family History Library Catalog (FHLC) at http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp. From this page, you can do a Place Search or a Surname Search (among the choices). If you look for records in a given state or county, you will find long lists of types of records available, with an abstract for each, and by clicking on "Film Notes" on each page you can determine the film numbers to order.

For example, I am in the process of collecting probate records for my colonial ancestors in Bristol County MA in the time period 1680 to 1800 or so. There is a printed index to the early probate records, which lists the volume and page numbers of the records in the probate books. By renting three films for the first 8 probate books (for \$5.75 each), I have been able to copy about 100 pages for about 20 ancestors - wills, inventories, accounts, etc.

I implore you to extend your research into probate records and land records because that is where you will find proof of relationships that will help you find more elusive ancestors.

I also implore you to use the LDS Family History Library Catalog and a nearby Family History Center to access these tremendous resources on microfilm. You will need to make a trip to order the films and a second trip to read the films and copy any records of value to you.

Please note that I am not an LDS church member, just a long-time satisfied FHC user with bookcases full of copies of original source records that prove ancestral relationships.