

Introduction to Kirtland Family History Research

RESIDENTS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY KIRTLAND, OHIO, including leaders and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Kirtland area, are mentioned in the early records of Geauga County, Ohio, and later in those of Lake County, Ohio. Such records include biographies, cemetery records (gravestone inscriptions and sexton records), compiled genealogies, court records, federal census schedules, journals and diaries, Kirtland Safety Society stock ledgers, Kirtland Township minutes, deeds and other land and property records, local histories (such as township and county histories), newspapers, periodicals (historical and genealogical), school records, tax records (often known as tax duplicates), vital records (such as civil marriage records, which begin very early in Ohio), and many others. These records, including published historical sources, genealogical collections, computer databases, and others, are described in this guidebook. Of particular importance to genealogists and historians are the contemporary journals and diaries kept by early Church members and other residents of northeastern Ohio.

BEGINNING KIRTLAND RESEARCH

It is best to work from “the known to the unknown” when searching for family history information (begin with more recent

family information, such as that offered by parents and grandparents). The first place to begin family history research is to obtain records found in home and family sources, such as certificates (church and vital records, baptismal certificates, marriage licenses), church records, correspondence, diaries and journals, family Bibles, funeral programs, genealogies, letters, military documents, newspaper clippings, photographs and photograph albums, scrapbooks, wedding invitations, and similar records.

Interview older family members, such as grandparents, to learn more about family names, dates, places (localities), and relationships and determine if there are family traditions relating to nineteenth-century residence in northeastern Ohio. Relatives, especially older family members, may have photographs and family documents, such as copies of vital record certificates. It is also important to have a record-keeping system, such as a genealogical software program, to keep track of research findings.

The next step is to conduct a preliminary survey of research performed by others—search the Internet for personal Web sites, family history sources, lineage-linked genealogies, biographies, computer databases, published compiled genealogies, articles in genealogical periodicals, and other similar compiled sources.¹ Some of these sources, such as compiled genealogies, may also be found on data CD-ROMs. Genealogical information found in

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1. Reference guidebooks are available that describe Ohio genealogical sources. Examples include Carol Willsey Bell, *Ohio Genealogical Guide*, 6th ed. (Youngstown, Ohio: Bell Books, 1995); Carol Willsey Bell, *Ohio Guide to Genealogical Sources* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1988); and Kip Sperry, *Genealogical Research in Ohio*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2003).

compiled sources, such as computer databases and undocumented genealogies, should be verified by searching in original records.

Sources for Geauga and Lake counties (and other northeastern Ohio counties) of genealogical interest include the following (depending on the time period and research objectives):

- atlases and maps
- biographies
- cemetery records and gravestone inscriptions
- census population schedules, 1820–1930
- church records
- city directories
- court records
- deeds and other land records
- divorce records
- local histories (such as town, county, and regional histories)
- manuscript collections (unpublished materials)
- military records (service and pension files)
- mortality schedules, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880
- naturalization and citizenship records
- newspapers and obituaries
- passport applications
- periodicals (genealogical and historical)
- tax lists (real property and personal property)
- telephone books
- township records (such as Kirtland Township)
- vital records (births, marriages, and deaths)
- wills and other probate records
- yearbooks

After home sources and compiled sources have been searched and relatives have been contacted for family history information,

researchers should then look for ancestral names in computer databases. Some of the major genealogical databases include the following:

- Early Membership Historical Records, 1830–1848, the major computer database for locating nineteenth-century residents of Kirtland, Ohio, and also genealogical information regarding early LDS Church members and RLDS Church members in Ohio and elsewhere. It is a genealogical and historical database available at the Kirtland Family History Center (Historic Kirtland) and Saints of Kirtland building. This database was compiled by Milton V. Backman Jr. and Keith W. Perkins over many years and with assistance from Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., and the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. It is described in more detail in the “Computer Databases and Genealogical Collections” section later in this volume. A portion of this database is known as *The Saints of Kirtland*.
- Ancestral File is a computerized database of over 35 million lineage-linked names of living and deceased individuals organized into family groups and pedigrees. One version, showing names of deceased people only, is available online at the LDS Church’s FamilySearch™ Internet Genealogy Service (www.familysearch.org). Another Ancestral File (DOS) version showing names of many living individuals, along with their linked pedigree and family group records, is available on CD-ROMs at LDS Family History Centers (branch genealogical libraries).² Both versions are indexed.

2. A list of current LDS Family History Centers is available online at www.familysearch.org by clicking on “Library.” A list of Centers is also available from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City (fhl@ldschurch.org).

Ancestral File does not accept new submissions or corrections to existing data.

- International Genealogical Index (IGI) is a computerized index of over 750 million names of deceased individuals from throughout the world. It serves as an international index mostly to births, baptisms, and marriages. Many of the names are lineage-linked, at least for a few generations (using the Internet version of the IGI), allowing the user to download pedigree charts and family group records from an individual's record. Many early Kirtland residents are indexed by name in the IGI, which is available online at FamilySearch Internet (www.familysearch.org). An older DOS version is available on CD-ROMs at over four thousand LDS Family History Centers throughout the world. Two limitations of the IGI are duplicate names, and incomplete genealogical information and source documentation. Nevertheless, it is one of the largest genealogical indexes.
- Pedigree Resource File (PRF) is a growing computerized database of lineage-linked genealogies indexing over 86 million names. PRF contains records that individuals have submitted online through FamilySearch and shows information about the submitters. Many genealogies show notes and sources. The index is online at FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org); however, lineage-linked pedigree and family group record data are available only on CD-ROMs, which show more family information.

The above genealogical databases are particularly useful in locating nineteenth-century Kirtland and northeastern Ohio residents. Information found in any compiled genealogical database, such as Ancestral File, International Genealogical Index, Pedigree

Resource File, and others, needs to be used cautiously. Information should be verified by researching in other records, especially original records—for example, census, church, court, land, military, probate, tax, township, and vital records.

Several useful reference books have been published that describe the historical background of Kirtland, life in Kirtland, the Kirtland Temple, and Mormons in Kirtland. Foremost among these titles are:

- Anderson, Karl Ricks. *Joseph Smith's Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989.
- Backman, Milton V., Jr. *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983.
- Lake County Historical Society. *Here Is Lake County*. Cleveland: Howard Allen, 1964.
- Launius, Roger Dale. *The Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative*. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1986.
- Lupold, Harry Forrest. *The Latch String Is Out: A Pioneer History of Lake County, Ohio*. Mentor, Ohio: Lakeland Community College Press, 1974.
- Prusha, Anne B. *A History of Kirtland, Ohio*. Mentor, Ohio: Lakeland Community College Press, 1982.

Many periodical articles describe what is known historically as the “Kirtland Period,” 1831–38, such as articles published in *BYU*

Studies and other periodicals.³ Newspaper articles, especially those published in Painesville, Ohio, and in Geauga and Lake counties during the nineteenth century, have covered stories about Mormons and life in Kirtland, although not always favorably.

KIRTLAND SOURCES

A selected list of some of the major genealogical and family history sources that identify many nineteenth-century Kirtland and Western Reserve residents is listed below. These titles are described further in this volume under “Kirtland Bibliography.”

- Backman, Milton Vaughn, Jr., Keith W. Perkins, and Susan Easton [Black], comps. *A Profile of Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio, and Members of Zion’s Camp, 1830–1839: Vital Statistics and Sources*. 2nd ed. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1983.
- Black, Susan Easton, comp. *Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*. 50 vols. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989.
- Black, Susan Easton, comp. *Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. 6 vols. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993.

3. For Kirtland, Ohio, articles, see especially *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971), 319–544; *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972), 343–543; and the January 1979 *Ensign* issue.

- Census schedules enumerating Kirtland residents (and other residents of northeastern Ohio) every ten years, 1820–40 (names of heads of households are listed; the rest of the family members are shown statistically by age categories under male and female). See also the 1850 to 1930 U.S. census population schedules (where names of all members of households are enumerated, along with other valuable genealogical details, such as age, state or country of birth, and other information).
- Early Church Information File, available on microfilm at Brigham Young University and the Family History Library. Known as ECIF, this is one of the major personal name indexes for identifying early Latter-day Saints, including those who resided in Kirtland during the nineteenth century.
- Geauga County and Lake County, Ohio, records: cemetery, census, church, court, land, marriage, military, probate, tax, and vital records, and other sources described later in this volume, including genealogical databases and collections.⁴
- Kirtland Land and Tax Records, Kirtland Township. Also known as “Land Transactions of the Saints, Kirtland, Ohio, 1830s and 1840s.” Research by Keith W. Perkins and Lyle S. and Gladys A. Briggs. Manuscript notebooks are available at the Kirtland Family History Center, Kirtland, Ohio.

4. Mormons resided in several other counties in northeastern Ohio during the nineteenth century; however, the emphasis of this work is Kirtland, Lake County, and Geauga County, Ohio. Family History Library microfilm numbers are available in the Family History Library Catalog online at www.familysearch.org and an earlier version is available on CD-ROM.

- Lake County Historical Society (Kirtland Hills, Ohio). Kirtland File. Loose files of Kirtland newspaper articles, typescripts, pamphlets, and manuscripts. These are available at the Lake County Historical Society, Kirtland Hills, Ohio, and on microfilm at the Family History Library.
- *LDS FamilyHistory Suite 2*. Provo, Utah: Ancestry, 1998. CD-ROM. This compact disc includes many early LDS biographical sketches, photographs, church histories, periodicals, newspapers, guides, bibliographies, immigrant rosters, vital records, and other Mormon sources. It is indexed.
- Shepherd, Paula M., and Roland K. Smith, comps. *Kirtland Heritage: Kirtland Heritage Collection Index*. Kirtland, Ohio: Kirtland Branch Genealogical Library, 1984; Chardon, Ohio: Printing Associates, 1984.
- Western Reserve Historical Society. Genealogical Committee. *Index to the Microfilm Edition of Genealogical Data Relating to Women in the Western Reserve before 1840 (1850)*. Cleveland: The Committee, 1976.
- Western Reserve Historical Society. Library. *Genealogical Data Relating to Women in the Western Reserve before 1840 (1850)*. Collected and compiled by the Woman's Department, Cleveland Centennial Commission. Cleveland: The Society, 1973.

FINDING THE POSTERITY

Since the 1980s, a program known as “Finding the Posterity” has been active in the Cleveland Region, The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints, and later in the Kirtland Ohio Stake. Some of the goals and objectives of this program⁵ have been to

- Identify and contact living descendants of nineteenth-century Kirtland residents
- Share genealogical and historical information with descendants of early Kirtland residents
- Encourage LDS Church members to do genealogical research to locate their non-member relatives
- Explain the prophecies concerning Kirtland
- Provide missionary activities for living descendants of early Kirtland residents

5. “Finding the Posterity’ Is Kirtland’s New Challenge,” *Ensign*, December 1982, 68–69; “Finding the Posterity: The Family Organization Opportunity” (Cleveland: Cleveland Region, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985); “Kirtland: Village of Prophecy” (n.p., n.d.). For indexes to early Kirtland Saints, see especially Early Membership Historical Records, 1830–1848 (a genealogical and historical database available at the Kirtland Family History Center, Kirtland, Ohio); Milton Vaughn Backman Jr., Keith Perkins, and Susan Easton [Black], comps., *A Profile of Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio, and Members of Zion’s Camp, 1830–1839*, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1983); Paula M. Shepherd and Roland K. Smith, comps., *Kirtland Heritage: Kirtland Heritage Collection Index* (Kirtland, Ohio: Kirtland Branch Genealogical Library, 1984; Chardon, Ohio: Printing Associates, 1984); and Kirtland Land and Tax Records, Kirtland Township (“Land

- Locate and preserve Kirtland artifacts, such as furniture
- Locate and preserve early Kirtland records, such as genealogies, correspondence, photographs, and journals
- Build up and promote the Kirtland Family History Center (branch genealogical library in Kirtland)
- Make Western Reserve historical and genealogical sources available at the Kirtland Family History Center
- Establish contacts between descendants of early Kirtland residents and family organizations
- Maintain computer files and indexes on early Kirtland residents
- Obtain media coverage in newspapers and on television and the radio
- Provide proxy LDS temple ordinances⁶ for early Kirtland residents

Transactions of the Saints, Kirtland, Ohio, 1830s and 1840s”), research by Keith W. Perkins and Lyle S. and Gladys A. Briggs (manuscript notebooks at the Kirtland Family History Center, Kirtland, Ohio).

6. In temples, Latter-day Saints perform proxy baptisms, endowments, and sealings for deceased ancestors in addition to performing endowments and sealings for themselves. See 1 Corinthians 15:29; Matthew 16:19, 18:18; and other scriptures. Temple ordinance dates for deceased individuals are available for Latter-day Saints to view in the International Genealogical Index online (www.familysearch.org) and in several other resources.

REPOSITORIES OF KIRTLAND RECORDS

Many libraries, archives, and historical societies throughout America house materials relating to Kirtland, Ohio, northeastern Ohio, the Western Reserve, and the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ). Mailing addresses and Web site addresses are listed in the appendixes to this volume. A summary of genealogical and historical holdings of major repositories of Kirtland, Geauga County, and Lake County records is listed below:

- Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Housed within the Lee Library is the Utah Valley Regional Family History Center—the largest Family History Center in the LDS Church. Integrated within the Lee Library and the Family History Center are over 290,000 rolls of microfilm and thousands of microfiche, as well as books, genealogies, government documents, local histories, periodicals, manuscript collections, newspapers, photographs, maps and atlases, rare books, electronic databases, United States census records on microfilm 1790–1930, and other resources relating to academic subjects, genealogical and historical subjects, Western Americana, and Mormon materials, numbering over seven million items.
- Chardon Public Library (Gauga County Public Library), Chardon, Ohio. The Anderson Allyn Room, located in the Chardon Public Library, houses books, microfilms, CD-ROMs, and manuscripts relating to Geauga County and the Western Reserve, including Kirtland. Genealogical records include card indexes, census records and census indexes (1820–1930), city directories, computer databases, pub-

lished genealogies, manuscript genealogies (family group records in three-ring binders, many with photographs and newspaper clippings), gravestone inscriptions for Geauga County, land ownership maps, county and other local histories, maps, military records, naturalization records, newspapers, obituary indexes, oral history collections, periodicals, probate records, tax records (tax duplicates since 1810), township records for each township in Geauga County (articles, photographs, pamphlets, etc.), and vital records.

- Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, houses the official records of the LDS Church and also has microfilm copies of some early RLDS Church records and historical documents. Holdings of the Church Archives include original and microfilm copies of LDS Church records, minutes of meetings of local Church units, membership records, form E reports, deceased members' records, stake and other Church historical records, some genealogical records of LDS families, photographs, oral histories, audiovisual materials, architectural drawings, and other manuscripts, including diaries, journals, financial accounts, and other primary source material pertaining to the history of the LDS Church.
- Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, houses printed and published materials that document the LDS Church from its beginnings in 1830 to the present, and contains some two hundred thousand published items, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers (originals and on microfilm), maps, microfilms and microfiche, card files, computer databases, rare books, *Journal History of the Church* (mainly newspaper clippings), local histories, some genealogical records for LDS

families, audiovisual materials, and printed sources of other religions. See especially the cumulative index from 1986 to the present, *Index to the Church in Periodical Literature*, created by the staff of the Church History Library and available online at <http://chperiodicals.lds.org>.

- Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio, houses a large book collection, including many genealogical and historical sources for Western Reserve counties. Sources include biographies, city directories, genealogies, local histories, newspapers, and indexes to newspapers.
- Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri, houses some twenty thousand books, periodicals, microfilms, microfiche, manuscripts, photographs, rare books, audiocassettes, videos, and pamphlets relating to the history of the Community of Christ, as well as Church history and Church records. Included are records covering the early Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri periods of Mormon settlements. Manuscript materials include Church records, diaries and journals, correspondence, and photographs (pictorial archives). Their holdings include published and other sources relating to Kirtland, Ohio, and the Kirtland Temple. The library also has a card index to the *Herald* (formerly the *Saints' Herald*) and other Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) periodicals. The main emphasis of the collection today is on religion and peace as it relates to the Community of Christ. Online databases available in the research library include ProQuest, FirstSearch, Books in Print, BibleWorks5, and American Theological Library Association full-text database. The library is a member of the Kansas City Library Consortium (for online cataloguing and interlibrary loan).

- Family History Library, Salt Lake City, is the largest genealogical research library in the world. The greatest strength of its collection is the over 2.4 million rolls of genealogical and historical records on microfilm. The library has over 310,000 books, 742,000 microfiche, 4,500 periodicals, CD-ROMs, U.S. census records on microfilm 1790–1930, cemetery records, church records (particularly LDS Church records), compiled genealogies, court records, land records, local histories, military records, naturalization records, tax lists, wills and other probate records, vital records, and many other similar records and indexes to records. Collections of the Family History Library are international in scope. See the Family History Library Catalog (FHLC) for a listing of the library's holdings (www.familysearch.org). Most microfilms may be loaned to the over four thousand Family History Centers (local branch genealogical libraries).
- Geauga County Archives and Records Center, Chardon, Ohio, houses over five thousand linear feet of original non-current local government records for Geauga County dating generally since 1806. Records include auditors' tax duplicates and tax lists since 1810, clerk of courts civil case files and criminal case files (some records date from 1806), county commissioners' journals since 1806, court journals and records, land records since 1798 (recorders' deeds and mortgages), maps, probate court marriages and marriage licenses beginning in 1805, naturalization documents, probate court records (journals, case files, wills, estates, letters of administration, final record, and guardianships since 1806), school records beginning in 1838, and printed local history sources for Geauga County. General indexes to many Geauga County records are also available. Many of their

nineteenth-century records are on microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Note that Lake County records prior to 1840 are included with Geauga County records.

- Kirtland Family History Center (a branch of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City) houses books, computer databases, CD-ROMs, maps, manuscripts relating to early Kirtland residents, and a small microfilm collection. Emphasis is on Kirtland, the eastern counties of the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio, Mormon history, genealogies, and Kirtland land and property records.
- Kirtland Temple Historic Center, Community of Christ, houses a book collection related to Kirtland and Mormon history, history of the Community of Christ, photographs, maps, CD-ROMs, and vertical files. Many items are available for sale.
- Kirtland Public Library, Kirtland Kiwanis History Room, has a small collection of materials related to the history of Kirtland. Materials include books, newspaper clippings, maps, photographs, and vertical files.
- Lake County Courthouse, West Courthouse Annex, and Administration Center, Painesville, Ohio. Located in several buildings are current and noncurrent government records for Lake County, such as court records, deeds and other land records, maps, wills and other probate records, tax lists, vital records, and other genealogical records. Contact the Lake County Courthouse (47 North Park Place, Painesville, OH 44077) for current location of records. (Some older Lake County court records are stored in other buildings in

Painesville.) Birth and death records are kept by the Lake County Health Department, 33 Mill Street, Painesville, OH 44077. Many Lake County nineteenth-century records are on microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.

- Lake County Historical Society, P. K. Smith Research Library, Kirtland Hills, Ohio, has a valuable book collection of Lake County and Geauga County materials. Found within this research library are card files to several Lake County records, cemetery records, census indexes, century homes folders, compiled genealogies (family histories), Heritage House Card Index, local histories, maps, manuscripts, Mormon sources, newspaper clipping files, photographs relating to Kirtland, Lake County, and Geauga County, Ohio, scrapbooks, and vertical files (genealogies, newspaper clippings, photographs, etc., in file folders).
- Morley Library, Painesville, Ohio, has a fine book collection of Western Reserve sources, with an emphasis on Lake and Geauga counties. Genealogical resources include a card index to obituaries and death notices in the *Painesville Telegraph* (1822–1986), *The News-Herald* (1986–31 December 1997), and other local newspapers; newspapers on microfilm; city directories; census indexes; marriage indexes; periodicals; printed genealogies; county and other local histories; gravestone inscriptions (mostly Ashtabula, Geauga, and Lake counties); high school yearbooks; vertical family files of genealogical materials (genealogies, Bible records, school records, and other sources); copies of manuscripts (typescripts) relating to the early history of Lake and Geauga counties; microfilms; CD-ROMs; genealogical records for several other states; online databases; newspaper

clippings in archival boxes arranged by township; and records of the Lake County Genealogical Society. Digital obituary indexes for *The News-Herald* for 1998 to the present are available online at www.morleylibrary.org/genealogy.htm by clicking on Obituary Index and then entering a name of interest.

- Ohio Genealogical Society, Mansfield, Ohio, maintains a large library of genealogical and historical sources for Ohio and has a particularly strong collection for northeastern Ohio counties. In addition to books and microfilms, the library also has family Bible records, card files, and a large Ancestor Card File and ancestor charts that contain many references to Western Reserve families. Members of this society may borrow books from its Lending Library of duplicate books.
- Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, has one of the largest genealogical and historical collections in the state, including many sources for the Western Reserve. Here researchers will find a large newspaper collection, many manuscripts, biographies, census indexes and census records, city directories, genealogies, land records, local government records, local histories, maps and atlases, military records, periodicals, photographs, tax lists, state vital records, and many other resources. Their Web site includes many finding aids, indexes, and records (www.ohiohistory.org).
- State Library of Ohio, Columbus, Ohio, houses one of the largest libraries of printed materials in the state. Located here are many cemetery records, census indexes, city directories, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) typescripts, genealogies, local histories, maps and atlases, military

records, periodicals, published vital records, and many other sources. The State Library also has a large microfilm and microfiche collection.

- Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, is one of the largest genealogical and historical libraries in the country. Of special interest are over 235,000 books and 25,000 volumes of newspapers as well as microfilms, microfiche, photographs, CD-ROMs, and many manuscript collections. Genealogical collections include cemetery records, census indexes, church records, city directories, computer databases, court records, deeds and other land records, diaries and journals, ethnic records, over 18,000 genealogies and family histories, local government records, local histories (city, township, and county histories), maps and atlases, military records (especially for the Civil War), passenger lists, periodicals, probate records, tax records, township records for Western Reserve townships, U.S. census records on microfilm 1790–1930, and vital records, including many transcriptions of records. As one of the eight members of the Ohio Network of American History Research Centers, the Western Reserve Historical Society is the regional repository library of local government records for Geauga and Lake counties and other Western Reserve counties, although many records are still located in each respective county.⁷

7. See the Western Reserve Historical Society online catalog at www.wrhs.org; see also Kermit J. Pike, comp., *A Guide to the Manuscripts and Archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1972), and supplements.