

Preparing for Your Visit to the Oakland Regional Family History Center

Our staff would like your visits to the Family History Center to be as productive as possible. Experience has taught us that the patrons who come prepared have a better time and get the best results. Our services, including genealogy consultations, are free though there is a fee for photocopies and ordering film or fiche on inter-library loan.

Beginning Genealogy

1. Talk with family members and take careful notes as to what they know. Even approximate or suspected names, dates and places are better than nothing.
2. Take special care to ask maiden names, names of siblings, and places of residence. When you cannot get exact dates of birth, marriage and death, use careful questioning to narrow down the time frame
3. **If you have started a genealogy database** in your computer at home, bring a backup file or a gedcom file of your data. We can handle backup files from the following programs: PAF, Ancestral Quest, Legacy. For any other program we would need a gedcom file. (Note - Gedcom is a universally interchangeable form of your data produced from genealogy software – you make it from your data by using the “Export” function, usually found under the “File” menu of your family history software.)
4. **If you have not started a database** [click here](#) to print a pedigree chart and fill out as much as you can from family knowledge and lore.
5. You may wish to take home digital copies of some of your findings. If so, depending on what you are accustomed to using, bring a 3.5” blank diskette, a blank, formatted Compact Disk (CD), or a Flash Drive (also called Thumb)
6. Please bring notepaper and pencils (we do not allow pens in the FHC).
7. For more help getting started see [How to Start Your Family History](#)

Intermediate and Advanced Researchers Coming for the First Time

1. The catalog of the Regional Family History Center is online at www.oaklandfhc.org. Your visit here will be more productive if you have an idea of where you would like to begin.
2. If you use genealogy software, it will be helpful if you bring a copy of your database with you. We can handle backup files from the following programs: PAF, Ancestral Quest, Legacy. For any other program we would need a gedcom file.
3. We offer free access to several genealogy research websites. You will find them listed on our home page. You may want to check some of them out before you come to see which would be most helpful to you.
4. We are a branch of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. As such we have access on inter-library loan to their microfilm and microfiche holdings. If you do not find what you need in our catalog, check their catalog at familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/ and consider ordering film or fiche into our center. The cost for ordering a microfilm is \$6.45 for 5 weeks and microfiche costs \$.50 each for the first 5 in a set and \$.10 for each additional fiche. (We can accept orders by mail; call for details [510-531-3905])
5. You may wish to take home digital copies of some of your findings. If so, depending on what you are accustomed to using, bring a 3.5” blank diskette, a blank, formatted Compact Disk (CD), or a Flash Drive (also called Thumb Drive). You

are also welcome to bring your laptop (we have WiFi access), your digital camera or whatever media you are comfortable with.

Temple Name Preparation

1. If you are a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and wish to prepare an ancestral name for the temple. Please register at new.familysearch.org before coming to the center and then bring your **user name** and **password** **or** bring your **Membership Record Number** (*Available from your ward clerk or on your temple recommend.*) and **your Confirmation Date** (*Available from your ward clerk.*) and we will help you register.
2. Bring the identifying information you need on the ancestral name you wish to prepare. This would include full name, birth date and place, death date, and depending on which ordinances you wish to perform also spouse's information, marriage date and place, and parents' names. It is helpful if you bring a backup of your PAF database.
2. If you are planning to attend the temple the same day you come to the Family History Center, **please allow plenty of preparation time in the FHC**. It will take you at least half an hour to prepare a name and can take considerably more time if you are not logged into New Family Search or are missing some of the information you may need.

Why bring a flash drive, or CD or diskette?

If you only want printed copies of the data that you find, you don't need to bring recording media. However, we find that many people wish they had brought recording media enabling them to take a digital copy of the data home and save a lot of handwriting and the necessary typing to enter the data when they arrive home.

Having an electronic copy not only keeps you from having to hand copy the data that you find, but also makes it immediately available to your home computer.

If you bring your email account information you can often email digital copies of the information to yourself, this is especially helpful if you are using an Apple Computer, or have forgotten to bring adequate recording media. Please remember that many email providers limit the size of your email to 10 MB. If you find several Census Pages or copy several microfilm images you can easily exceed this size limit.