

A REPORT ON SOME LATIN AMERICAN
MATERIALS IN THE GENEALOGICAL
LIBRARY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS
CHRIST OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS
AT SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH*

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A rarely-mentioned resource for historical research is the microfilm collection of the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints located in Salt Lake City. This collection contains nearly one million rolls of microfilm of mostly parish and civil registers from throughout the world. Together with 134,041 volumes of books and manuscripts in the Library of the Genealogical Society, the collection constitutes the largest of its kind in the world—almost awe-inspiring in its magnitude. Furthermore, over seventy microfilm camera teams are continually filming all over the world, with thousands of rolls of film processed each month. The purpose of this note is to acquaint Latin American scholars with the collection and its usage.

Presently the archives contain 113,903 one-hundred-foot rolls of 35 mm. microfilm pertaining to Latin America. Microfilming of all Mexico's parish records is nearly completed, a collection now containing 101,752 rolls. This means that parish and often civil registers from the earliest records extant to the twentieth century are available to scholars for use. In addition to Mexican records, the church currently has 4,153 rolls on Argentina, 1,018 on Chile, and 5,224 on Guatemala. The microfilming of Argentina's parish and civil registers is scheduled for completion by 1977. Three camera teams are presently microfilming ten to fifteen thousand frames per day, adding over one thousand rolls annually to the Salt Lake City collection. The municipality records of Buenos Aires have been completed, and work continues in the provinces.

The process is an ongoing one in the major areas, and as filming is completed in one country, cameras are transferred to another. A partial breakdown of completion shows:

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Mexico	Roman Catholic Church Records	91%
	Pre-1901 Civil Records	50%
Guatemala	Church Records	55%
	Civil Records	60%
Panama	Church Records	92%
Chile	Church Records	10%

The material is being gathered by the Latter Day Saints for genealogical purposes but microfilming is not confined to records of births, deaths, and marriages. The church has often found it more efficient to microfilm the entire holdings of an individual parish and municipal collection. As a result, wills, parish histories, diocesan minutes, Inquisition records, collective biographies, and local histories are all to be found within the collection.

Among the materials relating to Mexico, for example, may be found records containing information on baptisms, confirmations, marriages, deaths, *cofradías*, *diezmo* and *testamentos*. These are broken down by state, diocese, city, and parish, with the years and types of records varying from place to place. For instance, the holdings for the parish of Santa María Asunción, city of Tlaxiaco, diocese of Antequera, state of Oaxaca, includes: Baptismal, 1639–1968; matrimonial, 1692–1967; and diezmo, 1802–1881. In the parish of La Asunción, city of Mexico, archdiocese of Mexico, Federal District, the records held are: Baptismal, 1536–1953; testamentos, 1660–1809; matrimonial, 1646–1953; and deaths, 1671–1954.

Other Mexican church records include the archdiocese tithing data from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, ministers' writings and petitions ranging from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, pastoral visits, census records of various places, financial records, data on mortgage titles and property taxes from 1542 to 1893, and records of ecclesiastical councils from 1536 to 1957. From the archdiocese of Morelia there is film containing *Información Matrimonial y Negocios Diversos* (1555–1915) which includes wills, marriage banns, baptismal information, etc. This archdiocese once included the states of Michoacán; Guanajuato; Colima; and parts of Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, and Jalisco.

From the Colegio de Abogados in Mexico City there is data available regarding *limpieza de sangre* (1761–1822), and material relating to the Mexican Inquisition (1581–1768). Other Inquisition records from the General Archive's *Procesos de Santo Oficio de México 1522–1820* are also available. Civil records comprise a significant part of the collection and include notarial records of Puebla de Zaragoza from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, and similar material from Guadalajara ranging from the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, from the state of Jalisco there is data concerning the sale and settlement of land (*Tierras y Aguas*) from 1584 to 1866, as well as probate records from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Mexican materials that may be microfilmed in the future include such items as the *Índice de Tierras*, *Títulos Nobiliarios*, *Indiferentes de Guerra*, the records of the *Hospital de Jesús*, as well as various catalogs and inventories of the General Archives of Mexico.

Guatemala is the second most heavily represented among Latin American

countries with material ranging from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. There are records of the *Juzgado de Bienes de Difuntos* (1613–1819), and the *Cámara de Real Sala del Crimen* (*Crímenes de Chiapas*, 1781–1782, 1804–1809). Audiencia records of Guatemala are fairly extensive and include material from the *Actas Capitulares* (1808–1822), *Tierras* (1518–1902), *Pensiones* (1607–1821), *Padrones de la Intendencia de Comayagua* (1741–1806), and *Juzgado de Matrimonios* (1683–1810). From the *Archivo General de Centro-América* there are considerable holdings of the city of Guatemala notarial archives, extending from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Material from the *Dirección General de Estadística* of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries (partial for each century) include *Padrones* and *Difuntos y Tributos*. The *Registro Parroquial del Sagrario Catedral de Ciudad de Guatemala* is represented with baptismal, confirmation, marriage, and burial data from 1612 to 1920.

Argentine material comprises records from the archdiocese of Córdoba such as: *Concurso a Curatos y Oposiciones* (1699–1859), *Causas y Demandas de las Curas y Seculares ante el Señor Obispo* (1636–1884), *Comunicaciones con el Gobierno Nacional* (1760–1910), *Capellanías* (1643–1884), *Juicios Criminales* (1699–1905), *Juicios Eclesiásticos* (1693–1905), and *Santos Oficios de la Inquisición* (1610–1827). Baptismal, marriage, and death records of various Buenos Aires churches are also available.

For other Latin American countries there are fewer holdings, but they include such materials as the notarial records of Asunción, Paraguay from 1603 to 1691; the Lima cathedral records from 1538 to 1759; and the *Archivo del Gen. Juan A. Lavalleja* from Uruguay. From the Brazilian National Archives there are a few items of interest: *Os Francêses Residentes no Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1820*; the *Ralacão de Algumas Cartas de Sesmarias Concedidas em Território da Capitania do Rio de Janeiro, 1714–1800*; and from the *Torre do Tombo* in Lisbon, Inquisition records concerning New Christians from 1711 to 1715.

In addition to the records of the Genealogical Library, the Salt Lake City holdings contain much material concerning the Mormon Church. These are located in the Historical Department and constitute but the beginnings of a continuing project; for Latin America they comprise largely twentieth century records. The Mormon Church has some 350,000 members throughout Latin America (about 10 percent of Church membership), and records include MSS histories (historical reports of various branches—annals in chronicle style), diaries and oral histories of missionaries and residents in Latin America, and a photograph collection and publications of various missions. These records may be consulted at Salt Lake City after registration with the Historical Department.

In the Salt Lake City archives, material is cataloged by province, municipality, and then by individual parishes within the municipality. Once the parish has been located, the file cards will identify the material chronologically and by content. Each roll has a number and the film can be obtained from the research specialist on the floor by requesting the proper number. While it is advisable to visit the archives for sustained research in the collection it is not mandatory, since the majority of the materials can be obtained on loan from any of the more than one hundred branch libraries throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and

New Zealand. Branch libraries have a microfilm catalog for the entire collection, which is updated periodically, and can request a film from Salt Lake City. It is then sent, with a postage fee, to the branch library where it is available to scholars on a two-week loan basis. Use of the collection, either through branch libraries or Salt Lake City, requires some organizational planning. A possible three-week delay between requesting and receiving the films at a branch should be expected. If the delay is anticipated and planned for, however, the problem is eliminated.

For those doing research in Salt Lake, lack of red tape and ready access to the microfilm is notable. One simply checks the card catalog for the desired film and then proceeds to the fourth floor (Latin America), where the films are neatly arranged in metal drawers. There are about 250 microfilm readers throughout the building, and copying from microfilm or xeroxing of documents is accomplished easily and at moderate cost. Positive prints are available for use (not purchase) at the Library of the Genealogical Society in Salt Lake City (and branch libraries) where trained, knowledgeable, and efficient personnel are available to guide and assist those making use of library facilities, particularly with respect to genealogical problems.

Needless to say, the value of this vast collection for scholars from a variety of fields is inestimable. The material is a bonanza for the demographer and is extremely useful for any type of socioeconomic study. Further information and a complete list of branch libraries can be obtained from the Society, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111.