Chapter 6

Gathering the Records

Of all the activities of the Genealogical Society, probably none has captured the attention of the world at large as much as its vast microfilming program—an effort to gather into one place the public, church, and private records of value to genealogical researchers. Started as a small project during the Great Depression, the microfilm program eventually became a sophisticated mainstay for the genealogical programs of the entire Church. Archivists, concerned over the loss of documents during World War II, were interested in assuring the preservation of their records, and the willingness of the Church to fund microfilming projects offered the means to do so. The program was initially undertaken in countries where Church members had the most ancestry, but eventually burgeoned worldwide.

Managing such an expansive effort was not an easy task. Producing quality films under a wide variety of circumstances continually challenged Society technicians. Adequate funding was a persistent problem. The filming effort was often accompanied by suspicions of the Society's religious motives and adverse publicity, although the appreciative comments of many who benefited from the microfilmed records were equally, if not more abundantly evident in the press. The vast numbers of genealogical sources necessitated making difficult decisions to define the scope of the filming project. Control from Salt Lake City worked for a few decades, but eventually, as the project expanded, supervision had to be decentralized.

Delbert Roach, 1947, observes the operation of a microfilm printer manufactured by Ernst Koehler. The printer copied a print master's images onto undeveloped film.

As the film collection grew, providing a means of storing and preserving the camera masters became a pressing issue. The solution was a vault blasted from the interior of a granite mountain, providing ideal storage conditions. Also, experiments in centralized film processing, contract filming, and high-reduction filming were conducted in an effort to increase efficiency.

The acquisition program expanded tremendously in both size and scope after the beginning of microfilming in 1938. The Society experimented with gathering new resources such as oral interviews. In 1975 approximately eighty microfilm operators produced 40 thousand rolls of film containing about 34 million exposures. In 1990 over two hundred operators produced 70 thousand rolls containing about 110 million exposures.[1] While filming opportunity was originally restricted in certain countries, political and social changes in the 1980s and 1990s made possible acquisition projects on every continent and in almost every nation.

The Need for Microfilm

By the mid-1930s, better methods were clearly needed for acquiring and handling the vast numbers of records potentially available to genealogical researchers. The Genealogical Library contained only printed records and handwritten manuscripts, and such resources provided just the tiniest fraction of the materials needed by most families. In 1943 the Church had practically exhausted its research facilities and poor record keeping was causing an unacceptable level of duplication in temple work. The Society board reported to the First Presidency:

> The needs of the Temples have far outstripped the research facilities of the Church. Until this is more evenly balanced, considerable time and money will be wasted and great duplication of effort will ensue. We have more or less concentrated our attention toward the building of temples and the performance of ordinances therein and have relatively neglected the acquirement of genealogies. It would be unwise to permit this situation to continue.
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> . . . Many of the records which are now on the shelves of the Genealogical Library have been exhausted as far as names for temple work are concerned. Through the first six months of this year more than 546,000 names were checked at the Index Bureau and of this

number 211,000 had previously been endowed. This is the highest percentage we have ever noted and we are hopeful that it can be reduced.

. . . However, unless the Genealogical Society can provide a greater number of records secured from original sources, duplication of research work will remain at a high level.[2]

Securing information from original sources was time consuming and expensive. Tracing their ancestry as far as possible required many Latter-day Saints either to travel extensively or to hire professional genealogists. In many places, such as the Scandinavian countries, vital records were not even published. They were available only in manuscript form in government depositories.[3] Moreover, efforts to acquire more genealogical materials for the library were becoming complicated. In 1936, for example, an arrangement was made with the North Carolina Historical Commission to allow the Society to type cards of marriage records, with three copies going to the Society and three to North Carolina.[4]

That same year, Elder John A. Widtsoe urged the Society to begin copying or photographing European parish records, if permission could be obtained. With war threatening to engulf Europe, Elder Widtsoe warned of the danger such a tragedy could pose to government depositories where so many valuable records were housed. The Society quickly voted to appoint a committee to investigate the genealogical situation in Europe. Two years later, European Church members were hard at work copying parish records in some countries, such as Holland.[5] Such unsupervised manual labor was obviously inefficient, however, as well as fraught with possibilities for error. The need for something like the microfilm program was becoming obvious.

The Beginning of Church Microfilming

Ernst Koehler, a German immigrant, first brought the possibility of microfilming to the attention of the Society. A photographer in his homeland, Koehler had actually microfilmed some German books on genealogy before he emigrated to the United States. The Society authorized Koehler to investigate equipment, conduct experiments, and make recommendations. James M. Black was assigned

to work with him.[6] Among other things, Black and Koehler soon discovered that many genealogical materials were already on microfilm and were available for purchase from governments and other agencies.

Before the Society acquired its first camera, it began to raise money to purchase records already on film, especially in Europe where an international crisis was imminent. A program to develop their own microfilming project was first presented to Church genealogists as an emergency measure because of the possibility of war. On 12 May 1938, Archibald F. Bennett wrote to stake genealogical representatives praising the new technology:

> Almost priceless original records containing genealogical data . . . can now be reproduced accurately and in completeness at a very nominal cost. . . . In view of the perilous state of world affairs, it seems that we must not delay in availing ourselves of every reasonable opportunity for securing the precious records so necessary in our work.[7]

In the same letter, in an attempt to raise funds, Bennett asked the stakes to solicit new memberships in the Genealogical Society or direct donations to a book fund from those who were already members. In December the appeal was renewed with even more urgency. Bennett wrote to the stakes:

> With a world trembling on the brink of wholesale war and devastation, there is every possibility that unless we act swiftly and decisively the records of millions upon millions of our ancestors will be destroyed beyond all recovery. Apparently the Lord has granted us a lull to seize this opportunity to rescue the records before it is too late. At the same time he has inspired the development of microphotography, by which records can be copied quickly, accurately, and so cheaply that it is almost unbelievable. It us up to us to act NOW![8]

Bennett was delighted with the enthusiastic response. By April, some stakes had subscribed over 200 percent of their quotas.[9]

At the same time, possibilities for microfilming were encouraging, for the Society had already received permission to photograph nearly two and one-half million pages of Danish parish records and a similar opportunity seemed likely in Germany and England.[10] In addition, the Society began to purchase United States records on film, as well as other genealogical records from various other organizations.[11] Nevertheless, problems with purchasing

microfilms of records soon became evident. In 1939, for example, the Cannon family agreed to pay the cost to produce a microfilm copy of parish registers from the Isle of Man. The Society placed an order with University Microfilms at Ann Arbor, Michigan, to do this work. After several months, University Microfilms reported that they were unable to do the job. The parish ministers were unwilling to have the records microfilmed for fear of losing the payments they received when people came to the parishes to do the research themselves.[12]

Meanwhile, in October 1938, the Society purchased its first microfilm camera, a Graflex Photorecord, for $265. In November, Ernst Koehler began filming the Nauvoo sealing records and indexes. By the end of the year, the Society had filmed thirty-one volumes, consisting of 9,913 pages on 12 rolls of microfilm. A small beginning, but the program would grow dramatically in a surprisingly short time. On 10 January 1939, Koehler became the Society's first full-time, salaried, microfilm photographer.[13]

After the Nauvoo project was complete, Koehler began investigating other potential filming projects. A Danish photographer offered to copy records in his homeland at a cost of $2,963.10 for 100,000 exposures. Koehler estimated he could do the same job for $1,444.80. The board decided to send its own photographer when and if funds became available.[14]

Recordak microfilm reader being used by Thelma Hill, head of cataloging in the Society Library, 1938. Courtesy Delbert and Barbara Roach.

The board also showed an early interest in acquiring copies of the huge storehouse of German records. The German Bureau for Racial Research in Berlin, consistent with Adolph Hitler's racial

theories, began during the 1930s to systematically gather and photograph old church parish records, encouraging the German people to trace their ancestry back at least to 1800. In the process, the Germans became pioneers in the photographic reproduction of records. By 1938 they had filmed 7,000 of the oldest, most dilapidated books of parish records. In 1939 the Genealogical Society wrote to German officials in an attempt to obtain copies of the films. In response, however, the Society was told that unperforated negative film was being used to photograph the records, and there was no printer available to make positive copies from such film. The Society replied that it had developed just such a printer and requested permission to send it to Germany to make the copies. Unfortunately, before that could happen all of Europe was engulfed in war.[15]

In addition to working with people in Denmark and Germany, the Society also sought an opportunity to secure records in Britain. The Church of England consisted of approximately 14,000 parishes, and the registers were usually in the custody of the parish priests. Hugh B. Brown, president of the British Mission, had attempted to get permission from the Society to begin microfilming those records, offering the Church of England positive prints of all records photographed. The Society suggested obtaining permission from each of the 43 diocesan bishops to approach the parish priests within their jurisdiction. After writing to the bishops, President Brown reported that he had received outright permission from some, "provisional permission by others, and curt refusals from still others." The majority of the bishops, nevertheless, were favorable to the idea. A British microfilming company, Micro-Security, Ltd., quickly offered its services to the Society. Some parish priests continued to resist the effort, however, fearing the loss of fees charged for the use of these records. Unfortunately, such continuing opposition as well as problems related to the outbreak of war prevented Micro-Security from photographing any parish records.[16] Most European microfilming had to wait until after the war.

In the United States, meanwhile, some significant projects got underway. One was in Tennessee, where the Works Projects Administration had sponsored the gathering and typing of county

records, as it had in several states, in order to provide work for people with certain skills. In 1939 the Society exchanged copies of records in the Society's library for permission to film the entire Tennessee collection of several hundred volumes. L. Garrett Myers and Ernst Koehler began filming in Tennessee in October. They were also able to microfilm early LDS Church records in Kentucky. When the filming in Tennessee was partially finished, the Society received permission to have the balance of the records sent to Salt Lake City, where the work was completed. The records were then returned to Tennessee.[17]

Two key selling points of the microfilming program were established at the beginning of the project. First, the filming was done at no cost to the institution holding the records. Second, a free film-print copy of whatever records were filmed was returned to the institution. These were important considerations to archivists with overtaxed budgets. It gave them an opportunity to preserve their records at no cost.

In 1940 the Society received permission to film records available at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, where 53,718 pages of handwritten family histories were housed. Concerned about possible U.S. involvement in the European war, the New York society was planning to put the records away for safekeeping. Its leaders were willing, however, to let the Society microfilm the records first, and George Easter was hired to do the work on a part-time basis.[18]

The same year, the North Carolina Historical Commission gave the Society permission to photograph the Historical Commission collections. James M. Black was immediately transferred from the Society's library staff to a full-time position in the microfilm department in order to do the work. In May 1941, he was sent to North Carolina, where he remained until October 1943. He filmed not only the commission records, but also the records in several county courthouses. In a genealogical odyssey that Archibald F. Bennett called the "migratory course of our photographer from county to county," Black took his family into eighty-three North Carolina counties and copied nearly every record of genealogical value.[19]

James Black's North Carolina microfilming assignment inaugurated a career that would last, with only a short interruption during

World War II, for over thirty years. He was assigned to important supervisory positions that took him throughout the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. Black's dedication to the Church and commitment to the microfilm program was exemplified in December 1945, when he was asked to return to the Society from his wartime job with the Union Pacific Railroad and continue his work in North Carolina. "Wages offered me were low in compari[s]on with those received at the Union Pacific Railroad," he later wrote, "but I considered the microfilming program of the Society the work of the Lord, and accepted re-employment."[20]

First Presidency Support

Despite the Society's success in Tennessee, New York, and North Carolina, the microfilming project was met with some reservations and initial restraint from Church officials. Some leaders had serious questions about the Church's financial involvement. In 1940, for example, Archibald F. Bennett proposed photographing a large collection of records at Raleigh, North Carolina. Although the price may not seem high by present standards, the estimated cost of $2,100 was too much for the Society's budget or the book fund gathered from members. The Society appealed to the First Presidency for funds, apparently believing that the obvious need for quickly obtaining more records would be persuasive.

The First Presidency did not approve the request. While they did not object to the Society continuing its program, they felt that genealogical research was an individual and not a Church responsibility. The First Presidency reasoned that Church financing would unwisely shift the responsibility for research from the members: "Once we begin this kind of work, we shall be involved into more and more expense until the amount would reach such proportions that we could not undertake to carry."[21]

The First Presidency's refusal to fund Society activities was not intended, nor interpreted by the Society, to be a restriction on Genealogical Society work. The Society continued to assume that its obligation was to gather all the records it could, using available membership funds. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith suggested that should the opportunity open up for gathering records from

England or Scandinavia, he would not object to again asking for help from the First Presidency. By this time, war had overrun all of Europe, causing Elder Smith great concern over the genealogical records. Nevertheless, he believed that the Lord would not only preserve the records, but would yet open up the way to obtain them.[22] The Society, meanwhile, put on an even more vigorous campaign for memberships and donations.

How long the First Presidency's official reticence lasted is unclear, but after the war, the official policy seemed to change quickly. L. Garrett Myers took a microfilm reader to the office of President J. Reuben Clark Jr., chairman of the Church finance committee, and spent hours showing him the possibilities. This demonstration apparently gave President Clark a clearer perspective on the importance of microfilming. He soon began using his influence to get money budgeted for the program.[23]

Church officials may also have been influenced by reports of a surprising amount of duplication in temple work and by the possibility that some of this duplication could be avoided by a better record-gathering system. Duplication was so prevalent that in some years the names eliminated because of previous endowments exceeded the number of endowments for the year. Acquiring more original source material would help prevent duplicating research. "It is with this thought in mind," one report said, "of making available to our people a maximum number of records in the least possible time with the least duplication, and the smallest outlay, that we have used the microfilm process in order to acquire millions of pages of genealogical data."[24]

Post World War II Expansion

Although microfilming was curtailed during the war years, the early projects provided an impressive beginning for the program and a base for further expansion. As soon as the war was over, the program grew dramatically particularly in Europe and Mexico. This growth is illustrated by the rapid rise in the amount of exposed film received. In 1944 and 1945, the Society received 24 and 69 rolls respectively. In 1946 the number went to 462, in 1947 it jumped to 4,501, and in 1948 it made another jump to 10,012.[25]

After the war, microfilming began again in Great Britain. In December 1945, the Society received permission to microfilm copies of parish registers located at the Newcastle Library in Durham. From a bank, James Cunningham, a local Latter-day Saint, obtained an old microfilm camera, which he and Frank Smith taught themselves to use. They finished the project in two weeks.[26]

Microfilming in Scandinavia began after the Society contracted with Arthur G. Hasso, an employee of the Danish National Archives and a former history professor at the University of Copenhagen, to film Scandinavian parish records. Hasso had offered to photograph the records seven years earlier, having obtained permission from the Danish Church Ministry. The Genealogical Society, however, felt the cost was too high, even after he offered a lower price. He filmed a number of records anyway and after the war, in 1945, contacted the Society again. This time they reached an agreement, and microfilming commenced in the Scandinavian countries in 1946.[27]

The next area outside the U.S. to be included in the microfilming program was Mexico. Work began there in 1952 after the mission president, Lucian M. Mecham Jr., witnessed the deplorable state of the nation's census records and pressed the Society for a year to do something about it. The records were stacked over six feet high, covered with dust, and soiled with droppings from pigeons roosting in the rafters of the abandoned church where they were stored. Other records were being lost through flooding, the hot climate, and neglect.

In August 1952, the Society sent Delbert Roach, a Spanish-speaking member of the Society staff, to begin microfilming in Mexico. With the help of President Mecham's influential friends and with a camera borrowed from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), he began filming at the National Archives in October. Roach continued to investigate record sources, finding vast quantities of desirable records and little opposition to them being filmed. After the Society began its filming, it received excellent cooperation from Catholic Church as well as civil officials.[28]

The history of early microfilming is filled with unusual, touching, and sometimes dramatic accounts of faith and devotion. None

Delbert Roach, surrounded by staff and records in the National Archives of Mexico when microfilming was initiated there in 1952. The Mexican film collection is the largest foreign collection of the Society.

illustrate this dedication better than the story of how a huge and important collection of German records came into the hands of the Church.[29]

In the 1930s, Paul Langheinrich, a German convert to the Church and an avid genealogist, was given access to all German archives and church record offices, and for a short time, did genealogical research for the government. In 1937 he moved to Berlin and did volunteer work in the Church's German Mission genealogical department. Near the end of the war, he became first counselor in the mission presidency.

During the war, as the allied armies advanced toward Germany, the German government began to take precautions with its genealogical records and other treasures, storing them away in places unlikely to be destroyed by bombs. Vast collections of documents and films were stored away in castles and mines located in eastern Germany, which eventually fell under Soviet control. Langheinrich was not willing to let such a priceless store of genealogical material escape the use of the Church. Immediately after the war, therefore, he and a few other German Saints began a personal crusade to find and recover this trove of information.

On 9 August 1945, Langheinrich wrote to the Russian commander in East Berlin, Field Marshal Zhukov, asking permission to provide food and clothing for Church members there and also to search for German genealogical materials. The chances of receiving a reply seemed remote,[30] but Zhukov passed the letter on to his successor, General Sokolovsky, who soon responded and gave Langheinrich approval to do everything possible for the Mormons in East Berlin and to keep any genealogical records that he could find. For the German Saints, this was clear evidence that the Spirit of Elijah was operating in their behalf.

At the same time, several young German Saints were called on missions. One of them was Rudolph K. Poecker, who left a wife and child at home and began his missionary work in January 1946. He was sent to lower Saxony, where many salt mines were located and which was under Russian control.

Elder Poecker, who had become fluent in Russian while serving in the German army, was soon called into the mission office, given a copy of General Sokolovsky's letter, and assigned to search

for the hidden genealogical records. He went from one mining town to another, showing the letter to Russian officers and asking questions. He finally found an officer who knew that some of the records were in Stassfurt, in a salt mine 400 meters deep. The officer told Elder Poecker, however, that he must have a list of the records before he could grant permission to remove them. Elder Poecker then went to the Stassfurt mine, where he found that the man in charge had been worried about the disposition of the records and wanted to help. The two of them descended to a huge underground cavern, where they found a large cache of books, all containing genealogical records, stacked on the floor. They wrote down the origin of each collection, then measured the size of the stacks, taking care to overstate the measurements, rather than taking a chance of measuring short, so that nothing would be held back when the books were taken from the mine and checked by the Russians. Poecker took the list to the Russian officer, who gave him permission to remove the records.[31]

One problem in the effort to retrieve these and other records was finding enough money to cover the cost of transporting them from their various hiding places to Berlin. After considerable soul-searching, Langheinrich and other local Church leaders decided to use 10,000 marks from local Church funds, even though they had no official permission from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. Such an opportunity simply should not be passed by, they reasoned. Later, after Langheinrich received 22,000 marks from the German government to establish an official archive, he returned the initial money to the Church.

Meanwhile, sixteen missionaries were assigned to help Paul Langheinrich retrieve records and transport them to Berlin. In February 1946, they went first to Rothenburg Castle on a mountain top in Thuringia. Having arranged with Russian officials for a railroad car, Langheinrich also rented a pickup truck and trailer to bring the records down from the mountain to the railroad. But the truck slipped and spun on the icy roads, and prospects for retrieving the records began to look bleak. Langheinrich and two missionaries stepped into the woods and prayed for help, then unhooked the trailer. The truck made the climb up the frozen road to the castle and the group was able to remove at least a few of the records. They would need a warm rain, however, one elder

remarked, if they were to get all the records out in time to meet the railroad car. That night the warm rain came, making it possible for the truck with it trailer to make it to the castle. Langheinrich left some of the missionaries there to load the load the trailer while he and the others went on in the pickup to Castle Rathsfeld. There they obtained a huge store of Jewish records. Providentially, the railroad car arrived one day late, giving the missionaries time to acquire all the records in both castles, load them on the train, and send them to Berlin. That night it snowed, and by morning the mountain roads were frozen over once again. The missionaries were convinced that their prayers were answered and that God was watching over that important excursion.

The next year, Langheinrich and another missionary were arrested when they tried to retrieve the records from the mine in Stassfurt. The Russian commandant reluctantly cleared them and accompanied them to the mine. As he inspected some of the records, he picked up a document labeled "Letter of Frederick the Great to His Grandmother" and apparently thought the collection had strategic military significance. "Do you believe that we are going to begin a war with you with the old grandmother?" Langheinrich chided, at which point the angry general declared that the entire car was seized. Langheinrich, however, simply stepped forward and closed the railway car door. The general drove away in a rage, apparently still hoping to stop the shipment, but Langheinrich immediately seized the opportunity to use the mine office telephone and called the railroad station. "There is a loaded car here," he said with an air of authority, "which must be picked up immediately and taken to Berlin." The car arrived in Berlin even before Langheinrich.

None of these records could become the property of the Church, but Paul Langheinrich was soon funded by the German government to establish an archive.[32] As soon as the archive was established, Langheinrich set up a microfilming program and provided films to the Society. He later estimated that he put over one hundred million names on film. Largely, then, through Paul Langheinrich's tireless efforts as well as the dedication of the missionaries who worked with him so soon after the war, a vast treasure house of genealogical information was preserved for future generations.

Promoting and Managing the Program

The Society received welcome support and encouragement from Church leaders as the microfilming project expanded. Members of the Quorum of the Twelve demonstrated special interest in the program during their travels. In 1946, for example, while visiting members in war-torn Europe, Elders John A. Widtsoe and Ezra Taft Benson encouraged local leaders to look into microfilming possibilities.[33]

The Society soon sent representatives to negotiate contracts with governments, churches, and institutions. Archibald F. Bennett was the first. He spent six months in Europe in 1947, working with the mission presidents, investigating filming opportunities, and negotiating new projects. In 1950, L. Garrett Myers went to Europe to adjust microfilming contracts to meet the realities of recent devaluations in currency and to be a troubleshooter and diplomat for the program. In Switzerland, for example, he temporarily suspended operations after concluding that a man working for the Society had "a penchant for doing the wrong thing" and, among other things, had said things during an interview with the press that made it difficult to obtain permission to copy certain records.[34]

Clearly, the Genealogical Society was entering a new technological age that provided genealogists the miracle they had long awaited. James Black and his associates were the unsung heroes who created the standards and procedures which made the miracle happen.

As the microfilming program grew to major proportions, one of the many problems to appear was quality control. In August 1947, James Black was appointed microfilm editor of the Society. Before his appointment, there had been literally no control, and some of the film the Society received was very poor. Making acceptable films was a complicated process that involved several stages, each of which could affect the quality and usability of the film made available for research.

Black and his staff began inspecting the films at the Society, noting all the problems and finding solutions. Many of the records, they discovered, needed to be refilmed. As a result, Black had to travel to filming sites throughout the world to train camera operators.

In July 1948, Black went to Europe. Prior to that time, because of a shipment of poor quality film from England, Joseph Fielding Smith had ordered a halt to all microfilming operations until Black's arrival. Black began his work in Dewsbury, where he worked closely with George Fudge, an experienced microfilm operator, who had just been appointed microfilm inspector. Black eventually visited sites in the British Isles, Switzerland, Italy, France, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In each country, he trained personnel and established procedures necessary to improve the program.[35]

Building the Collection

As the microfilm program mushroomed, so did costs. In 1948, just ten years after the program began, the Society presented the leaders of the Church with a 1949 budget request of $749,599.88 for microfilm projects in Holland, Norway, Great Britain, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and the United States. The budget request had grown by more than $580,000 in two years. Joseph Fielding Smith, who may have had reservations in the early days of the program, was now one of its most enthusiastic advocates. He supported the budget and was determined to have the Society present all the facts to the budget committee. "I feel there is a real need for speeding up this work," he declared. "I think the Lord is willing that we should hurry in getting the microfilming done."[36] In January, after the budget was approved, Elder Smith expressed his amazement at the approval of such an extensive program, especially in contrast to "the small way in which the work began years ago."[37]

An opportunity to economize came in 1949, when the Du-Pont Film Company agreed to give the Society a film dealership which, it was estimated, would save about $170 per day in film costs alone.[38] Genealogical work not only used high technology, but had also become a significant business.

The microfilming record was impressive. At the end of 1938, the Society had acquired only twelve rolls (100 feet each) of microfilm; ten years later it owned 17,051 rolls; in another decade, the number had grown nine times to over 189,849 rolls.

By 1954, the films at Society headquarters contained approximately 150 million pages of records, or the equivalent of 500,000 volumes. L. Garrett Myers liked to describe the collection by noting that "if someone had the patience to unwind all the rolls of microfilm the Genealogical Society of the Church . . . has and place them end to end, he would make a trip from Salt Lake City to Edmonton, Canada, and return before running out of film."[39] In 1959 the production of microfilm by the Society peaked at 56,989 rolls, more than double that of any previous year.[40]

During this period of almost unbridled growth, the Society's requests for funds seemed to be always granted. Such leniency did not continue, however, for other Church programs were also expanding. The Church was building more meetinghouses, for example, to meet the additional needs of its rapidly growing membership around the world. When the Society's budget estimate for 1961 reached $2,413,864, the Church Budget Committee not only asked for reductions, but even asked if the whole microfilming program could be suspended during the next year. The Society board was aghast. The written response of L. Garrett Myers shows how deeply entrenched the Society was in projects that would be practically impossible to cancel. Thousands of films, he said, were still in labs and editing rooms and must be processed before the film spoiled or before it was too late for retakes. Also, certain contractual obligations required completion in thirty to ninety days. Canceling them would be disastrous for various reasons: some projects were nearly finished, several archivists had made special preparations for the Society's microfilmers, some microfilm was on advanced order, and replacing trained workers would be difficult when the program was renewed. In addition, the situation in the British Isles and Europe was very favorable to the program, and the Society had certain exchange agreements that should not be violated.[41] In spite of all these objections, however, the Society decreased its budget request, deciding to discontinue some projects and slow others.

Because of budget considerations, microfilming costs were closely scrutinized in 1961. Filming expenses varied from site to site. Costs ranged from two to nine cents per exposure in the United States and were higher in some other countries.[42]

Questions of contract filming with individuals or companies and reimbursement on an exposure basis rather a salary basis were intensively examined. The decision at the time was to continue on a salary basis and to implement a new expense accounting form. Operators in North America met in Salt Lake City in January 1962 to review the issues and changes. By the end of the year, the Society reported that great economies had been effected through a "frugal" approach and that the Society was now financially sound.[43]

Film production dropped from a high of 56,000 rolls per year in 1959 to only 25,000 in 1963. After that, production began to rise again until it reached a level of between 40 and 50 thousand rolls per year. By 1969 the film collection had grown to 660,000 rolls, and by 1975, it reached 862,770 rolls. When some 100-foot rolls were divided for cataloging purposes, the total stored in the Granite Mountain Records Vault came to well over a million. They included records from every state in the United States and more than forty other nations.[44] In 1977, George Fudge remarked, "We spent $10 million in 1976. We could easily be spending ten times that much. The task confronting us is monumental."[45]

The level of acquisitions dropped precipitously with the temporary decision in 1978 to film only extractable records. It remained below 40 thousand rolls until 1986. Late that year, the Temple and Genealogical Executive Council directed the Society to review the question of whether or not the Society was filming family history sources fast enough. Anomalous in times when budget cutting was the norm, the Council's acquisition initiative underlined their deep interest in providing the sources for research to the individual Church member. The Society proposed an increased budget for filming records threatened by destruction because of political turmoil or deterioration.[46]

A three-year plan was approved that targeted growth from 50 to 100 million exposures each year by 1989. As the Society entered the fiftieth anniversary of microfilming, it was significantly expanding its acquisition effort. Acquisitions rose from 70 million exposures in 1986, to 85 million in 1987, to 95 million in 1988, to 106 million in 1989. The impetus of the three-year effort continued as the rate of acquisitions rose to 130 million exposures in 1992, a three-fold increase over the period before 1985. Even with

the increase in filming, Rick Ebert, the director of acquisitions, stated in 1991 that filming opportunities at that time still far exceeded the Society's ability to respond.[47] By 1994, the collection consisted of approximately 1.8 million microfilm rolls.

Public Relations

When James Black and others made contact with local authorities, they usually received enthusiastic cooperation. Many church and civic leaders were excited by the opportunity the microfilm program provided to preserve their records in permanent form at no expense to the community. In 1972, for example, Missouri's secretary of state publicly announced an agreement with the Genealogical Society to microfilm records in his state at a cost, over three or four years, of $500,000 to the Society. "The filming of more than 17 million pages of important genealogical records," he declared, "at no cost to the Missouri taxpayers, is an invaluable contribution to our state records management program. . . . Fires in courthouses and capitols have been our greatest enemy in preserving records. . . . With the microfilm on file, copies will always be available."[48] Such obvious mutual benefits were one of the factors in the success story of the microfilming enterprises.

Although reaction to the Church's microfilm projects around the world was generally positive and complimentary, there were exceptions. Some Catholic and Protestant church officials, for example, objected to the filming for various reasons. The Soviet Union even charged in 1953 that the program was tied to some kind of U.S. government effort to obtain detailed current population records.[49]

On the other hand, Genealogical Society representatives were frequently invited to speak to various public and private groups about the program. State and national governments enthusiastically supported microfilming because of what it could mean to their own record-keeping programs. In 1975, for example, the governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued an official proclamation praising the Church for its efforts and naming 15 July 1975 "Mormon Record Day."[50] In 1968 the Society received an award from Eastman Kodak Company for its "significant contribution to the

advancement of the science of information technology." James M. Arnold, vice president of the company, noted that the Genealogical Society was the second largest organization to make use of Kodak products and the only organization making any significant use of microfilm for the preservation of genealogical records. He warmly commended the Society for its "unique storage, indexing and classification system."[51]

Deciding Where and What to Film

In the 1940s, after the Church began to assist in microfilming costs, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith insisted that the first priority was to search the records of countries where most of the ancestral records of Church members were located. If they had approval to obtain records from Europe, Elder Smith felt they should get them even if they cost a million dollars. This kind of commitment led to the policy of filming first the records that would be most valuable to Church members, beginning in areas where a large number of people joined the Church in the early days.[52]

Until 1961 camera operators, under the general guidance of the Society, decided what to film. The new board of directors, established in 1961, began to tighten this policy. Because they were not experts in genealogical records, the board formed a Records Approval Committee to decide what should be filmed.[53] At the same time, George Fudge toured operations in the United States. To his dismay, he found some filmers photographing inconsequential records such as full runs of newspapers.[54] To control the materials being filmed, Fudge recommended that a filming supervisor be appointed to implement the decision of the Committee.[55] The board appointed Fudge as temporary supervisor in 1962. In 1963, James Black was appointed to the newly created position of North American filming supervisor.[56]

With his appointment as Society vice president in 1964, Theodore Burton inquired where the First Presidency thought the Society should film. In response, the Presidency reaffirmed assumptions that had long guided the filming program: "The Society should continue as it has been doing, and concentrate its efforts in the records of the United States, British Isles, and northern

European countries and then spread into those areas in which there is the greatest number of new converts and where it can be done most economically and the data obtained most readily."[57]

Elder Burton also addressed the issue of what to film. In January 1964, he established the Microfilm Planning Committee (Records Selection Committee, 1967–70, then the Acquisitions Planning Committee through 1979, when the Directors Council assumed the responsibility) to succeed the Records Approval Committee, which had not functioned during the previous year. The Microfilm Planning Committee included representatives from all divisions in the Society and met on a regular basis. The various division representatives provided information based on their division's responsibility. For instance, Priesthood Genealogy informed the committee what records members of the Church needed and which areas were growing but were as yet unrepresented in the microfilm collection. Acquisitions identified what records were available. Temple Services was concerned about initiating filming in countries where temples were under construction, such as Japan and Brazil.[58]

A change in microfilming policy occurred as a result of the Society's focus on extraction programs in 1978–79. At that time, the Society decided to film "extractable" records only. This policy was rescinded in 1980, but the need to establish a long-term microfilming plan emerged from the discussions. A plan was developed in 1980–81 that required the gathering of a record mix that would provide not only for extraction, but also for tracing lineages. To apply this plan rigorously, the Society decided to write a profile for each country of the world and determine the records that needed to be filmed there in order to identify and link seventy-five percent of the families of the historic population.[59] During the next six-month period, Society staff members wrote record profiles for over one hundred countries.[60] In order to make decisions on what would be filmed even before cameras were in a country, these profiles were studied for information on record types, their value, and the estimated quantity yet to be filmed.

This program of consistent collection development was institutionalized in 1983 with the creation of a Collection Development Section.[61] This section was established to evaluate all proposed

acquisitions against the profiles and the current Society collection in order to avoid duplicate or redundant acquisitions. The new organization provided for a separation of duties between collection specialists, who decided what to film, and negotiators, who decided when and where to film. It helped negotiators to know exactly what type of record should be filmed if permission were granted.

As an initial step in accomplishing their assignment, section staff began to review and rewrite the profiles—somewhat hastily compiled the year before—to make sure that no important source was overlooked. In 1984, the newly rewritten profiles began to be published. Over the next decade, sixty-two profiles were extensively revised and updated to identify exactly what sources could and could not be filmed. Once a profile was approved, new filming projects could go forward without further review.

Decentralization[62]

Until 1958 the microfilming program was administered from the headquarters of the Society in Salt Lake City. Two main problems arose from this situation: retake orders were not returned promptly to camera operators and the delivery of donor prints was delayed. In 1958, Arnold Seiler from Salt Lake City was appointed as supervisor of a newly expanded filming effort in West Germany. This was the first instance in which the Society maintained an official filming representative overseas. Because filmers in other countries began to consult with him, Seiler soon began to function as the de facto supervisor of all European filming.[63]

In 1960 responsibility for European filming was shifted to the European mission president—the Church representative responsible for all other Church programs and activities in Europe. This arrangement did not succeed because the mission president did not have the time or background to manage the complex filming program. As a result, the Society sent Harold Jacobsen to Scandinavia and England in 1961 and George Fudge to Europe in 1962 in behalf of the filming program. In 1963 the Society appointed another European representative, a native of Holland, Syger Hasenberg. This arrangement lasted for several years until supervision of the filming was returned to Salt Lake City. In 1967,

Elder Burton transferred staff from the Research Division—previously involved in doing patron research—to the Microfilm Division, giving its staff the responsibility of becoming experts on genealogical sources worldwide. They gradually began to negotiate for the sources they identified.[64]

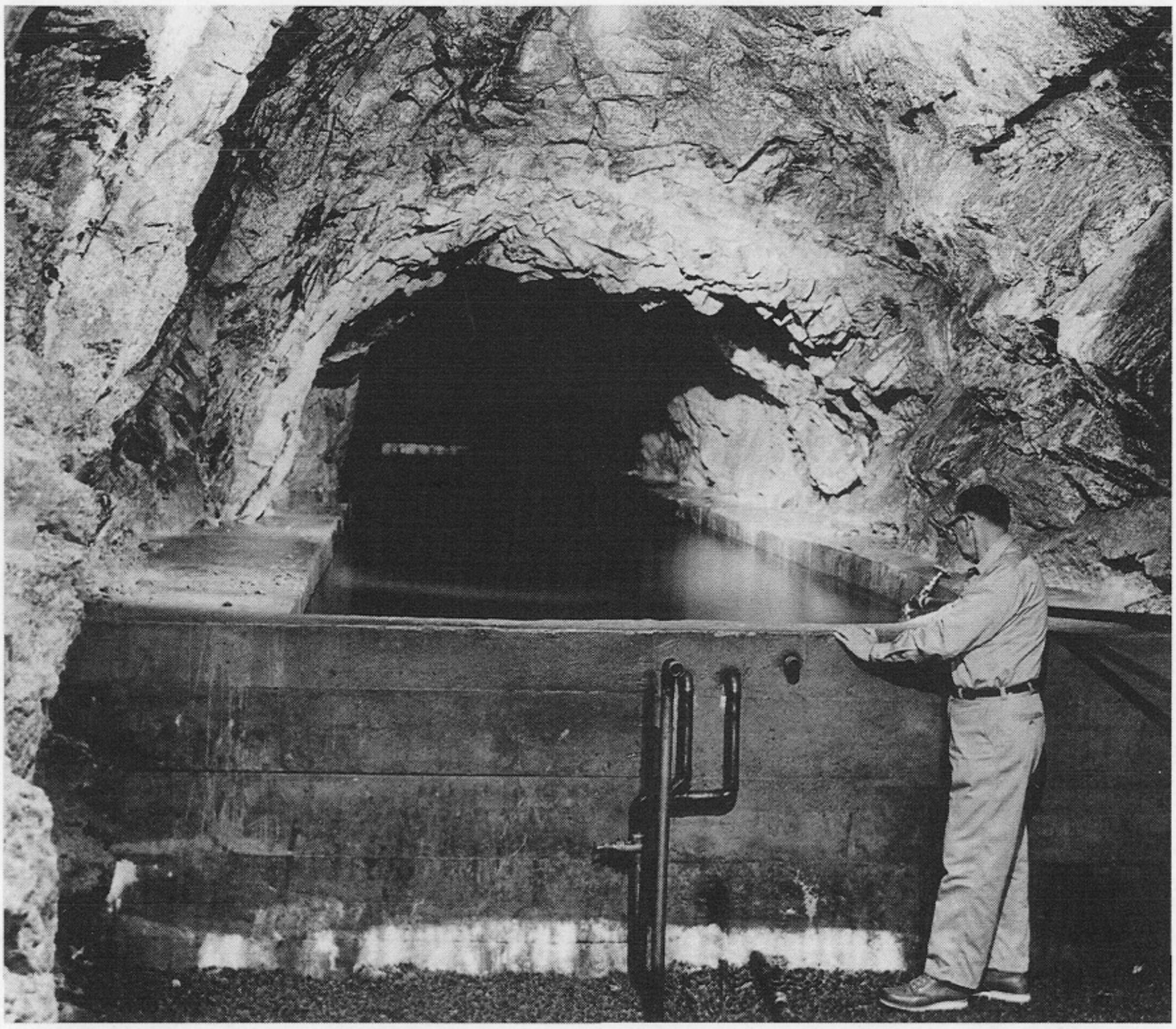
In 1972 the Society decided once again to establish European-based supervision and sent Ralph Hughes to live in Europe. Although he was primarily responsible for resolving technical problems, he began to deal with personnel and administrative matters by default. In 1974, Thomas Lee Boam replaced Hughes. Under Boam the process of transferring responsibilities for personnel and payroll administration, quality control, negotiations, and project administration from Salt Lake City headquarters to foreign staff accelerated. Boam hired regional negotiators from the local population. They knew the languages and customs of the areas in which they worked and could resolve problems more quickly and efficiently.[65]

In the wake of Boam's work in Europe, other personnel from Salt Lake City were sent out to other areas of the world to provide decentralized administration of the filming program. In 1978, Dennis Neuenschwander was sent to Eastern Europe and Mel Thatcher to Asia. Jim Streeter was sent to Latin America in 1988. The filming program continues to operate with area managers working in the field and local staffs developing and absorbing a larger role in the microfilming program.

In the 1980s, in an attempt to control costs, the Society began to rely more on film purchases, joint ventures, contracts, and missionary couples, rather than salaried camera operators. In 1993 the Society employed the equivalent of two hundred cameras to acquire new sources from around the globe. This was three times the seventy-one cameras in operation in 1976.

Granite Mountain Records Vault

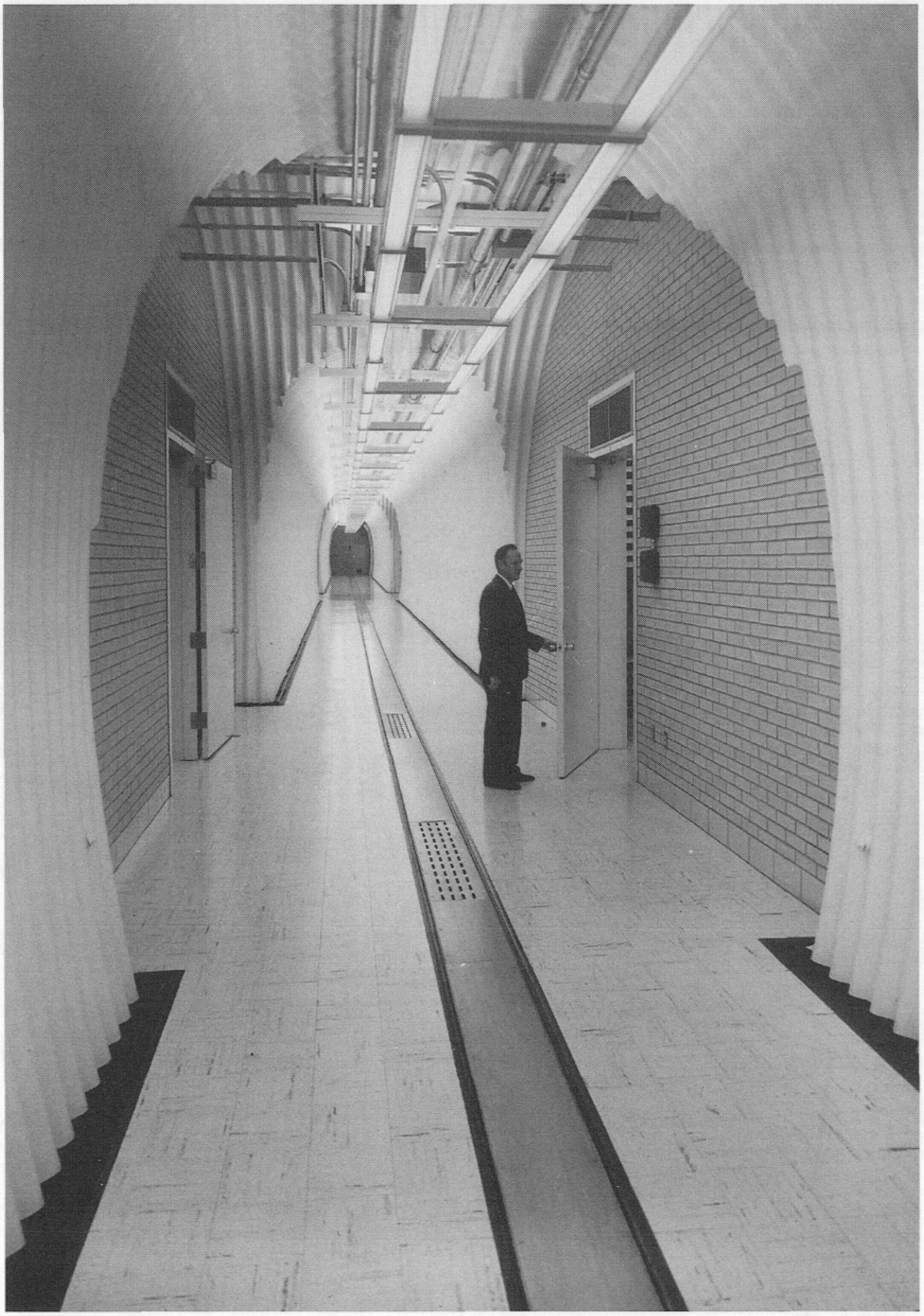
The massive influx of films to the library in Salt Lake City necessitated the construction of adequate storage facilities. Camera masters were first stored in the northeast corner of the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building, which had housed the library



Fresh water reservoir in the Granite Mountain Records Vault. This water, used in film processing, comes from a spring inside the mountain.

since 1933. By 1950 there was no place to store film negatives; they were kept in packing boxes on top of the TIB card file cabinets.[66] The situation was temporarily resolved with the 1951 construction of a film-storage annex on the southeast side of the library. Within six years, that facility had become insufficient, and in 1957 the negatives were moved to the vault in the basement of the Joseph William Taylor Mortuary, just up the street from the library.[67]

Meanwhile, a long-term solution was under discussion. In 1954 the Society announced the proposed construction of a "buried vault," where proper humidity and temperature conditions could be maintained and the film would last for "hundreds and hundreds of years."[68] In 1956 the Genealogical Society and the Church Building



Central corridor and entrance into a record bay at the Granite Mountain Records Vault. The central corridor provides access to each of six bays where the camera masters of the microfilms are stored.

Committee agreed upon certain design requirements,[69] although a final decision on the specific location had not been made. Site surveys and debates continued. A site near the Salt Lake City police department's pistol range, close to Ensign Peak, was seriously considered and unanimously approved by the board of directors in February 1958. When geologists examined it in detail, however, they discovered that the rock formation there would require expensive and cumbersome reinforcement and that the rock would probably leak. The board of directors also considered caves and mines near Salt Lake City, as well as the possibility of building an underground concrete and steel vault in the heart of the city.[70]

In 1958 testing began in Little Cottonwood Canyon at the former granite quarry where the stone for the Salt Lake Temple had been hewn. Test drills, boring five hundred feet into the mountain, demonstrated that the area was solid granite and that excess moisture would not be a problem. Because of these advantages, the Society determined that the twenty-mile drive from Church headquarters was of little consequence. In 1959 final approval was given to build at this site. One million dollars were appropriated to begin construction of the facility, which would be called the Granite Mountain Records Vault.[71]

Construction work began in the summer of 1960. After active tunneling began, workers encountered a flow of clear, cold water, pure enough for drinking. This was the only water discovered in the vault area. Eventually, the water was directed to a concrete reservoir that could store some 33,000 gallons of water, which was used for the vault's huge laboratory as well as for culinary needs. By December 1963, the vault was ready to receive the films. The move was completed in the middle of January 1964.[72] The total cost approximately two million dollars.[73]

The completed Granite Mountain vault consists of four huge cross tunnels, each measuring 190 feet long, 25 feet wide, and 15 feet high. They are connected on either end and through the middle by three corridors. The water reservoir is in the rear, behind the fourth cross tunnel. The front tunnel houses the office and laboratory area. The other three tunnels, which lie under nearly 700 feet of granite, are the storage areas. Heavy bank vault doors at the front of each of the three corridors guard the storage area. The

three storage tunnels have more than 65,000 square feet of floor space and are divided into six vault rooms. Each room can store 885,400 one-hundred-foot rolls of microfilm. Total vault capacity can reach the equivalent of 25 million 300-page books. The natural temperature in the storage area remains at 57 to 58 degrees year round, regardless of outside temperature. The natural humidity remains between 40 and 50 percent. Both conditions are ideal for film storage. An elaborate circulation and filtering system keeps fresh air moving through the storage area and eliminates dust, smoke, chemicals, and other air-borne particles.[74] An up-to-date film-processing laboratory in the vault provides the advantages of central processing, where quality control can be easily maintained and the film processing can be done efficiently and effectively.

Nature created some problems for the Granite Mountain vault in 1974, when unnaturally high amounts of moisture flowed through the rock and pooled in the cement floor below one of the vaults. The floor heaved upwards over a foot, and water began to seep into the vault. Micrographics staff donned work clothes and kept the water at bay until the problem was solved by drilling holes in the center of the floor. This measure permitted the water to flow into a floor drain and out of the vault.[75] In 1982 the water pressure built up again. Additional holes were drilled, and a permanent drain ditch installed to relieve the pressure.[76] By the flood

Granite Mountain Records Vault staff, 1966, in front of one of the portals.

year of 1983, the problem of water pressure had been resolved, and water buildup no longer threatened the vault.

In 1983 some blemishes were discovered on the films. In an audit of 17,228 rolls, half were found to have some form of blemish, none serious enough to make the film unusable. Most of the blemishes were traced to extended storage outside the vault without temperature and humidity controls or to poor washing in the development cycle. Eight years later the blemished films were reviewed. The blemishes had not worsened, indicating that vault storage appeared to have stopped blemish growth.

The process of print mastering was introduced in the 1980s. The printing process subjected films to temperature variations, humidity, and surface scratching. After numerous printings, some of the master films had begun to deteriorate. Experts decided to create a duplicate master for printing purposes after a master had been used five times. By May 1991, 37,445 rolls had been print mastered.[77]

As a repository for the huge investment of the Church in preserving records of the past, the Granite Mountain Records Vault, with its solid image, stands as a fitting symbol of the Genealogical Society's commitment to making these records available to future generations.

International Labs

In 1951 the Society decided, for the sake of efficiency, to decentralize some of its technical processes. To support European filming, a microfilm lab was established in The Hague. By inspecting, developing, and printing films on-site, the Society could save considerable expense that would be incurred if all these processes took place in Salt Lake City.[78] Filming errors were also inspected and corrected in Europe before the films arrived in Salt Lake City. By 1952 the laboratory was operational. Eventually it processed films not only from Holland, but also from other European countries, including East Germany, West Germany, Belgium, France, England, and Ireland. In 1958 the installation of additional equipment doubled the production capacity of the lab at The Hague.[79]

By 1956 production in Mexico warranted the installation of a lab. Four years passed, however, before the lab was approved and

The Society's first microfilm laboratory, ca. 1946. Ernst Koehler, the first microfilmer of the Society, sitting; his son, Richard, working at the developing sink. Courtesy Delbert and Barbara Roach.

constructed. Finally, in 1960, Lucian Mecham, who had been instrumental in starting microfilming in Mexico, returned to Mexico City at the request of L. Garrett Myers and supervised the lab installation. By that time, a three-year inventory (10,000 films) needed donor copies printed and the master films sent to Salt Lake City.[80]

In 1965, Elder Burton closed down all foreign labs, because they continued to be plagued with problems, and centralized all film processing at the Granite Mountain Records Vault. Unfortunately, centralization produced a four-month delay between a problem caused in filming and its discovery in processing.[81]

As a result, in the late 1970s, Church leaders approved re-establishing international labs. Frankfurt was chosen as the site of the first new lab. It was centrally located in Europe and was also the site of the Europe Area Office of the Church. The Frankfurt lab began to process German and Austrian films in 1978. By 1980 it was processing the films produced throughout Europe. Eventually, smaller labs were established in Japan and Brazil, and labs were set up under contract in Mexico and the Philippines.

Contract Filming

Elder Burton decided in 1967 to contract filming to a private organization. The plan was suggested by Van Neiswender, supervisor of the Microfilming Division. Supervising microfilmers around the world was becoming complicated, and quality control was still a problem. Dismissing people was difficult, even if their work was not satisfactory, because of the Society's desire to avoid ill feelings. Neiswender suggested making a contract with a commercial company that would hire people around the world, train them, and remove this burden from the shoulders of the Society. It seemed like a good idea at the time. The Society received a bid from Intrade, a branch of Trans-America Corporation, which organized a subsidiary, Reproduction Systems, to do the work. Reproductions Systems proposed to hire camera operators as independent contractors, rather than as salaried employees, and to pay them according to the number of exposures they took.[82]

The result for the microfilm operators was traumatic. In June all filmers in the United States received a letter from Elder Burton informing them that as of 15 July they would be released from their work for the Society. They were told that they would be hired by Reproduction Systems, according to terms worked out with that company, but otherwise their employment was terminated. Decidedly unhappy with the situation, some operators simply went to work elsewhere. Others reluctantly accepted employment with Reproduction Systems. To their surprise, they soon discovered that they made more money under the new system than they had made as salaried workers. They made better use of their time (obviously a result of the economic incentive), could hire help for themselves in order to work faster, and could work longer hours.[83] Meanwhile, Van Neiswender and other employees in the Society's processing lab went to work for Intrade, which set up its own lab in Salt Lake City.

In spite of its economic efficiency, however, the new program had its problems. Even though most operators continued to provide very good work, quality control in general declined, and more poor quality film began to show up. Some operators did only the records that were easy to film, skipping the difficult ones, and

requests for retakes were sometimes ignored. In some cases the "easy" records were filmed beyond the dates needed. Consequently, the Society canceled its contract with Reproduction Systems in 1971 and then rehired full-time microfilm operators. Ted F. Powell, formerly supervisor of the Genealogical Library, was appointed manager of the newly created Microfilm Operations Division. Powell supervised the microfilm operators around the world as well as the processing and evaluation at the Granite Mountain vault.[84]

42x Camera

The cost of the microfilming program resulted in continual efforts to economize. In 1980 discussion centered on filming exclusively with 16 mm film. This move would permit cuts in the filming budget without necessitating cutbacks in filming. However, it would require a filming reduction greater than the traditional 14x–16x reduction used in 35 mm filming. Also, better readers would be needed to adequately retrieve the film image. In 1982 a 42x camera was manufactured that could deliver six times the exposure count on the same amount of microfilm, resulting in a large reduction in costs for film and film handling, processing, and storage. At a 42x reduction, documents with dimensions up 19 x 25 inches could be reduced to an image on a 16 mm film. The 42x camera did not fulfill its promise in all respects, but it did provide an important option in many filming situations.

Prior to the development of the 42x camera, filming at such a high reduction was normally relegated to labs where equipment and environment could be rigidly controlled. The Society wanted to produce a camera that could film in any location under difficult conditions. No adequate camera was available on the market, so the Society sponsored the development of one to meet its needs.

High-reduction filming required exacting lens and camera head quality in order to produce acceptable film at a 42x reduction. JML Optics in Rochester, New York, produced thirteen lenses in 1982. The Society accepted five.[85] Kodak produced thirty camera heads. Eleven were accepted.[86] The cameras were installed at headquarters and produced acceptable film. In 1983 cameras were

sent to Italy, Minnesota, and Indonesia. The results were mixed. Filming went well in Italy and Minnesota, but in the primitive filming environment of Indonesia, the results were poor. The Society continued to promote the camera, and by the end of 1983, twenty-eight were being used in the field.[87] A decade later, they comprised approximately a third of the Society's total camera inventory.[88]

One significant problem with the new filming was returning the small image to its original size on a reader. The Society had to refit the readers at the library to handle the reduced image on the film. The Society received sixty-three zoom lenses in July 1983. Later, a 42x and even a 65x reading lens (which would return the image to larger than original size) were obtained from Northwest Microfilm. Readers at family history centers have been refitted as local circumstances permitted. In some countries, archivists would not accept the high-reduction filming because they did not want to buy new readers. Nevertheless, some archivists in other countries found that the small image was desirable, and they converted the film into microfiche format. Microfiche readers, unlike their microfilm cousins, were designed to handle high-reduction images.[89]

Oral Genealogy

For a decade and a half, the Society pursued an oral genealogy program intended to preserve ancestral information in countries where there were no written records. Mulivai Purcell conducted the first interviews in Samoa in 1968. Interviews in Tahiti began in 1972. In 1973 interviews were being conducted in American Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, and New Zealand.[90] The concept was simple—to tape the spoken memory of the living. In some societies, the memories of the older people extended back many generations. Their recollection often began with the most distant ancestor and continued a line of descent recounted to the present generation. The account would then begin with another distant ancestor and descend to the present. The final product was a pedigree in reverse—with the branches extending towards the present rather than back to the past.

In 1977 the program was taken to Taiwan and Indonesia. During 1978, changes were made in the technique of gathering

oral histories. Instead of making a tape, the interviewer recorded the information on a form. The interviewers would travel by foot or boat to various locations, collect the information, then return that data to Salt Lake City.[91]

In 1978 the Society initiated the program in Africa—in Gambia, which was made famous by Alex Haley's novel, *Roots.* The Gambian project was threatened by an attempted government coup in 1981. The head of the program personally persuaded a mob of 400 to refrain from looting the offices that housed the oral genealogy interviews.[92]

The collection of oral histories presented a significant problem. It was very expensive to gather and record the information. Taping, transcribing, and typing pedigrees made the acquisitions process much more expensive per name than microfilming a manuscript. In 1981 Church leaders directed the Society to stop recording oral genealogies and pursue filming of written records where they were available. Some budget was left to finish outstanding projects, but at the end of 1982, all funding for recording oral genealogies was eliminated. Not until 1990 was the collection of oral genealogies reauthorized and revived on a smaller scale in Indonesia.

A Worldwide Program

During the last three decades, records have been microfilmed in every corner of the world, resulting in a collection in which three-quarters of the records come from countries outside the United States. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have approved or directed the initiation of filming in each new country. As of November 1994, filming projects have been mounted in 101 countries around the world (see appendix II).

The filming program in North America has continued uninterrupted from its beginning. Early filming began in the eastern United States. By 1950 extensive filming had been done in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina. Massive filming efforts were mounted in New Hampshire and Vermont during 1952 and in Maine during 1954. Eight filmers assisted in the Maine project, the only instance when the Society concentrated a large group of filmers in a single state in order to canvas all record locations

and film all their genealogical records during a single summer. James Black contacted numerous town clerks, set up his camera in homes, tiny offices, stores, barns—wherever the records could be found and electricity accessed.[93] In 1956 filming began in the Southwest when the firm of Vance-Golightly of El Paso was contracted to film in New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and Northern Mexico.[94] Canadian filming began during 1957 with projects in Ontario. In Canada some of the most significant acquisitions were the films of Catholic records in Quebec and Ontario, where filming began in 1977 and 1979 respectively. In 1977, Elder Boyd K. Packer initiated an effort to fill a major gap in the collection by acquiring microfilms of the records of the Native Americans.[95] These records were filmed at federal records centers in Los Angeles, Fort Worth, Seattle, and Kansas City.

A wide range of record types have been filmed in the United States, unlike most other countries. In contrast with nations where civil registration or the records of a state church provide a single source for researching most of the population, the records of the United States are more diverse and each source less comprehensive. The most recent development in North America has been the filming of civil registration records. Vital record offices were generally unreceptive to Society initiatives until the 1990s—the only exception being Washington, which permitted the purchase of the state civil registration in 1959. Idaho deaths were filmed in 1990, and filming of civil registration records is now being conducted in North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, and Illinois, with more states to be done in the future. The civil registration of Ontario, Canada, for the nineteenth century was filmed in 1991-93.

Even with budget limitations since 1985, operations have expanded, primarily through the increased use of missionaries. Their role as filmers has been expanded into preparing documents for filming, an important, but arduous, task for large files of loose documents. After serving family history missions, many former missionaries have volunteered to film short-term projects. Contract operations and film purchases have also increased productivity.

Filming continued in Mexico during the 1960s. The Society did not move into other countries until 1965, when it initiated a project in Argentina. In Guatemala the Society began in 1970 to

film notarial records of colonial Guatemala (which included what is now Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica). Filming in Panama began in 1972. In Chile, the program got underway in 1973, after a complicated series of negotiations with the Catholic Church regarding permissions and with the government regarding import duties (for cameras and film).[96] Beginning in 1975, the Society rapidly expanded microfilming into many countries of Latin America. Costa Rican filming began in 1975. Projects were initiated in Peru, Brazil, and El Salvador during 1976. Bolivia followed in 1977, and Honduras, Paraguay, and Ecuador in 1979. The Society held the first Latin American filming seminar in November 1979 to better train the new corps of camera operators. Sessions were held in Guatemala City and Lima. In 1981 Caribbean filming began in the Dominican Republic.

Political instability, geographic circumstances, and religious antagonisms hindered, but never completely stopped, the progress of projects in Latin America. Camera operators were regularly searched at gunpoint in El Salvador during 1979, prior to the temporary cessation of filming there in 1980.[97] Similar problems were encountered in Colombia and Peru in the early 1990s, as film operators on occasion encountered terrorists or drug traffickers. Geographic circumstances have also been daunting. Rudolfo Becerra, filming in Mexico in 1979, transferred his equipment from jeep to donkey in order to film a parish register in Amixtlan Puebla. While filming in Bolivia in 1980, Carlos Ferrari was halted by local citizens who objected to the filming and doused him with water as he scurried to leave.[98] Although filming of Brazilian civil records continues, filming of church records in Brazil was halted in 1983, when, in response to an inquiry from the bishops of Brazil, the Vatican objected to the program.[99]

In more recent years filming coverage has extended to virtually all Latin American countries. Filming began in Colombia during 1985. In 1991 no filming had been done in Venezuela. Then a Catholic bishop granted permission. Soon thereafter he became an archbishop, permitting him to influence other bishops favorably. The Society received the first films from Venezuela in 1992. Filming projects were completed in most of the Caribbean countries between 1990 and 1992.

Filming in the South Pacific began in 1959, when a few films were received from a small operation begun in New Zealand.[100] Two years later, a project was started in Australia. Polynesian filming began in 1970 on the island of Vanua Levu, Fiji. An arsonist set fire to the government office building on Rarotonga, Cook Islands, in May 1992. The records would have been lost had it not been possible to restore many of them with copies of microfilm in the Society's collection. Fifty-one films of government records were sent gratis to the Cook Islands.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the Society took the microfilming program into Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. This expansion represented a major departure from the policy of forty years—filming only in countries where many Church members had ancestors. The Society saw the necessity of filming records before they deteriorated in countries where climatic conditions rapidly destroy records. The Society was also aware of the growth of Church congregations in these countries, justifying a program to gather records in their behalf. Anticipating that the Church would eventually be established in all countries, the Society believed it prudent to begin filming even before many joined the LDS Church. The Society also realized that the cost of filming was less expensive in countries where the economy had not yet matured.

Filming in Korea commenced in 1972, in the Philippines in 1973, Taiwan in 1975, Japan in 1976, and Indonesia in 1977. Investigation into the records of India began in 1979. A record type unknown in the West was identified in Hardwar, a major Hindu pilgrimage center in Northern India. A clan of priests known as pandas function as registrars of vital statistics for families that come to holy cities for ritual bathing in the Ganges River. Filming of these records began in 1981. In Sri Lanka, filming began in 1979 with the country's civil registration records, a project that continues to the present. Unexpected circumstances often impeded filming in Sri Lanka, as in many other developing countries. For example, in the summer of 1981, a drought in Sri Lanka reduced the nation's electricity output. Consequently, the Society's cameras sat idle for two months.[101]

The most dramatic breakthrough in Asia occurred in mainland China. The opportunity to film there arose after the death of Mao

Tse-tung. The reinstatement of exiled professors, librarians, and archivists in their institutions coincided with the Society's preparations for the 1980 World Conference on Records. The State Archives Bureau of China accepted an invitation to attend the conference. The Chinese delegation was amazed at the public interest in genealogy demonstrated by the large attendance at the conference. That fall the Archives Bureau extended an invitation for Society representatives to visit Beijing.[102] Ted Powell, director of acquisitions, and Melvin Thatcher, regional manager of China and Southeast Asia, entered the "forbidden" city in April 1981. This was the first time foreigners had ever been allowed to see the archives.[103] A contract was signed in March 1983—the first formal microfilming agreement between a Chinese archive and a foreign institution. In June 1983, the filming began. In recognition of its cordial relationship, the Chinese archive invited the Society to attend the sixtieth anniversary celebration of the First Historical Archive in October 1985. On this occasion, the State Archive Bureau announced its intent to grant foreign scholars access to the archives and to encourage international cooperation and exchange.[104]

Political instability in the Philippines prompted a dramatic increase in the film production in that country during 1987. In a short time, the number of cameras increased from four to thirty-seven. The filmers ran the cameras on three shifts. At the zenith of the project in 1989, twenty million exposures were received on 13,500 rolls of film.

Filming in Africa began under the direction of Elder Boyd K. Packer, who had requested that the Society look into the possibility of filming in Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe). At the time, the change from white minority to black majority rule was imminent. The change could have imperiled the records of the previous regime. In November 1976, Ted Powell, director of acquisitions, successfully negotiated the filming of the records, and by 1978 the civil registration of that country had been filmed. While in Africa, Powell also successfully negotiated with South Africa, and filming started there in 1977.

Film acquisitions in the Middle East began in Israel. Elder Packer, along with Society officials, visited Jerusalem in 1977 and met a contingent of nine archivists and scholars. Elder Packer

explained plainly that the Church wanted the records in order to provide Christian baptisms for their forebears. There was an immediate uproar until one rabbi, who taught comparative religion at Jerusalem University, asked for calm. He said, "You'll never make my grandfather, who is a rabbi, into a Mormon. . . . So why are we afraid? If we're afraid, we ought to join your Church. If we're not afraid we ought to let you use your money and help us preserve our records."[105] The request to acquire records was later granted.

In England the filming of parish registers in many localities was hindered by the concern of English church officials who did not agree with the religious basis of the LDS filming program. In 1952 the Society's filming effort was directed at obtaining civil records, and permission was received to copy the pre-1858 wills of Great Britain.[106] This proved to be a difficult project because the originals were rolled and coated with dirt and dust.[107] The project required a decade to complete.

The Society received a cable from England in 1951 announcing that official permission had been granted to film in Scotland.[108] The announcement was received with elation because negotiations had been underway for five years. Five cameras were installed in Edinburgh, and filming began of census records and parish registers.[109]

The British Isles was the focus of much filming activity during the 1960s. In January 1963, fifteen out of the forty-three cameras operating outside the U.S. were located in the British Isles. This number had decreased to three or four cameras by 1985. However, that year the Society was directed by the General Authorities to pursue a special invitation to film in Great Britain. Even though filmers had been scouring British archives for almost fifty years, permission had not been granted to film many records. Then in the early 1980s, many parish records were transferred into civil repositories, and the civil authorities were more responsive to negotiations with the Society than church authorities had been in the past. Additionally, interest in family history research was even more pervasive in Great Britain than in America. Archivists welcomed the opportunity to have frequently used collections filmed to preserve them for future generations. The Great Britain initiative lasted for seven years. At the end of the project in 1992, nearly

sixty million new exposures on approximately 34,000 microfilm rolls had been acquired. Included in these were parish registers from 5,110 parishes and bishop's transcripts for 4,516 parishes.[110]

Many filming projects were completed in Scandinavia during the first half of the 1950s. Filming in Norway was completed in 1951.[111] In the following year, filming was completed in Finland. Swedish filming received such emphasis that in 1954, the Swedish collection had become the largest foreign film collection in the Salt Lake City library, a situation that would continue for another decade. The initial filming project in Denmark was concluded in 1952.[112]

Even though Scandinavian officials in general seemed highly supportive of the program, there was a certain amount of religious opposition, not unlike that experienced in England. In 1960, for example, an article entitled "Intrusion into Hosts of Lutheran Dead" was published in Denmark and circulated in that country and Germany. Certain Danish bishops and other church officials strenuously objected to the implications of the microfilming program. In Norway, too, the state church initially objected when the microfilming project began in 1948. The press reported the clergy's criticism of the filming project. Some positive publicity came in March 1963, when Alvin W. Fletcher presented a roll of film to Sweden's King Gustavus VI. The film represented the last in a series of some fifty million photos taken in the Swedish archives over a period of fifteen years at a cost of more than a million dollars.[113]

The filming program in Germany and the Netherlands spread southward during the 1960s and 1970s and moved eastward during the 1980s. Germany was recovering from the postwar deficit of equipment, film supplies, and trained personnel. In the early 1950s, filming was pursued vigorously in East Germany. The parish registers on deposit at the Berlin-Dahlem archives, which had been gathered by Paul Langheinrich, were transported to the East German mission home for filming and then returned to the archives. Langheinrich and his son also microfilmed the rest of the collection gathered from the salt mines and castles and temporarily deposited at Humboldt University in East Berlin. In West Germany from 1950–51, the Society sponsored a project to film the Prussian records at Goslar that had been taken out of the eastern provinces by the retreating German army.

The parish registers of the Netherlands had been filmed by 1955, and filming of other records continued in that country. In West Germany, the first projects—since the filming in Goslar—were initiated in 1956. Negotiation efforts in Germany were assisted by appeals made in behalf of the filming program by a Dr. Lampe, a German archivist previously involved in the filming at Goslar.[114] In 1957 the Society received permission to copy all church and vital records in Belgium. Filming was initiated in France in 1959.

In the decade that followed, the focus of filming in Europe moved south as projects in Scandinavia and the Netherlands diminished and those in West Germany, Belgium, and France increased. Luxembourg was filmed between 1961 and 1962. Italian filming began in 1972 as a joint venture between the Society and the Parma Diocese, with the University of Parma acting as intermediary. The decision was then made to film the Italian civil registration records before the church records. Throughout the 1980s, approximately fifteen cameras operated in the various archives in Italy. Beginning in 1975, the initial Spanish filming was conducted in Barcelona. The microfilming program was temporarily stalled when a convocation of Spanish bishops voted against it but was

The first two hundred rolls of microfilm were presented in 1948 by (left to right) Rinze Schippers (microfilmer), Cornelius Zappey (Netherlands Mission President), and Archibald Bennett to the National Archivist of the Netherlands, Dr. D. P. M. Graswinckel. Filming began in 1947 and continues to the present.

The first Italian filming contract was signed in Parma, Italy, in 1972. Ted Powell and John Jarman flank the archivist (center). During the 1980s, the Society operated about fifteen cameras in Italy.

resumed in 1979. More cameras operated in Spain and Italy during the 1980s than elsewhere in Europe. Filming in southern Europe was particularly important to the expanding membership of the Church in Latin America, whose ancestry traced back to the countries there. Political unrest in Portugal during the early 1970s made negotiations there impossible. In 1976 permission was granted to film in Madeira, a Portuguese island. By 1979 the political situation had stabilized, and filming began on the Portuguese mainland. A majority of the church records in Portugal were filmed by four to five cameras from 1979 to 1989.

Filming continued in the other countries of Europe, usually without fanfare. However, negative publicity would occasionally impede the program. In 1979 a jurist for the Lutheran Church issued a legal brief, addressed to all Protestant clergy in Germany, trying to persuade them that the microfilming program was illegal. Clergy in Bavaria and northern Germany believed the brief while clergy in other areas ignored it.[115] The Society also encountered negative publicity in Switzerland. Many Swiss archivists favored a microfilming agreement with the Society but hesitated because of the negative publicity that previously had accompanied filming in a particular canton. In spite of this reluctance, every few years the records of another canton are opened up for filming. Since 1975 the church records in the archives of Zürich, Ticino, Graubunden, Jura, and Solothurn have been added to the Society's collection.

In France opposition resulted from political circumstances. When the Socialist party came to power in 1982, a member of the Communist party was appointed as the minister of culture. He demanded the Society provide a second donor copy and pay additional fees to the departmental archives to cover all costs incurred by the filming. The Society could not meet his requests, shut down its cameras in the departmental archives, and began filming in church archives.[116] With a new administration, the impositions were lifted, and a new contract was signed in 1987.

The Iron Curtain was not impervious to the filming program. In 1957 the archivist of Hungary contacted the Society to discuss the feasibility of filming there. The revolution of 1956 had resulted in a loss of many archival records. The archivist had read about the Society's filming program in professional literature and saw it as a feasible and available method to ensure the security of Hungary's archival heritage.[117] Extensive filming of parish register copies in the Hungarian National Archives was conducted between 1960 and 1963. The national archivist of Poland also read an article about the program in *Archivum,* a professional archival journal. He wrote to the Society in 1961, asking if it would be willing to film in Poland.[118] After extensive negotiations, in 1968 the cameras began filming in the Society's second major project behind the Iron Curtain.

Gradually at first, but then very quickly, the filming program in Europe began to move east during the 1980s. Greek filming began in 1979 at Corfu, an Adriatic Island off the west coast of the country. East German archives opened their doors in 1981. Filming in Yugoslavia began in 1985. During the civil war between Croatia and Serbia in 1991, the archive of Osijek was bombed, and many of the records were destroyed. The church records from the archive had already been filmed and thus were preserved from destruction. In 1991, after decades of negotiation, a major hurdle was overcome in Austria, and the filming of church records commenced there. As in many other cases, the Society had patiently awaited the day when long-sought-for records would become available. Its persistence has usually borne good results.

One of the most significant filming opportunities occurred in the former Soviet Union. After the first World Conference on Records,

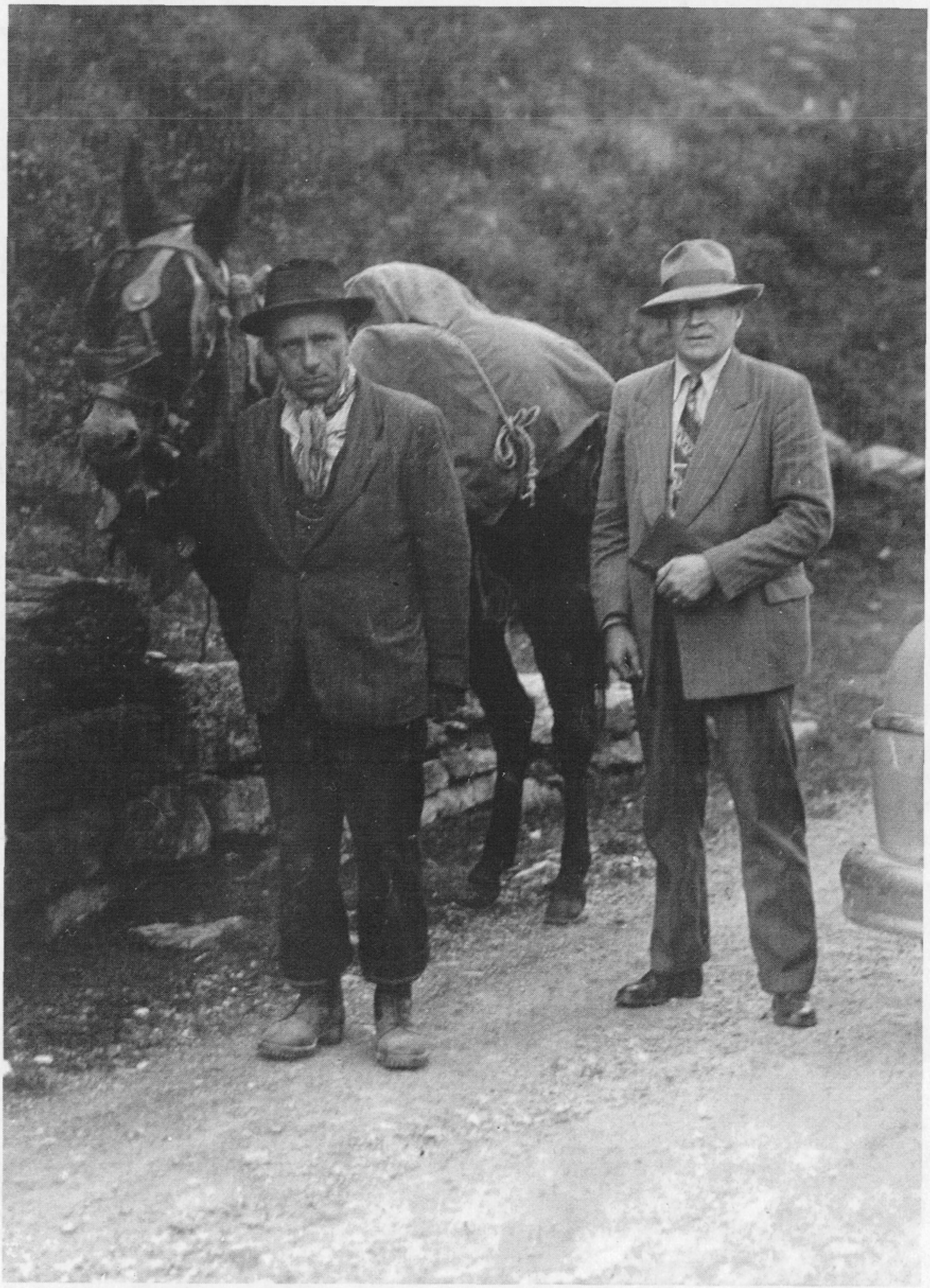
Society representatives repeatedly visited the archives administration in Moscow to initiate negotiations. The only result for twenty-two years was continued discussion. Soviet leaders had no interest in genealogical matters and suspected that the Society was a front for what they considered to be the omnipresent spying apparatus of the West. After the dissolution of the Soviet political structure in late 1990, the archival administration was freed from political bosses, and the archivists approached the Society. The dissolution of Soviet hegemony in 1991 freed archives not only within the Union, but also throughout Eastern Europe to negotiate with the Society. In 1991, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Estonia signed contracts; Russia and Slovenia signed in 1992; Albania, Armenia, Belarus, and Ukraine in 1993; and Lithuania, Moldova, and Georgia in 1994. (For more information on microfilming projects and production, see appendixes II and III.)

The Filmed Record

Microfilm stored in the Granite Mountain Records Vault provides a safe haven for the archives of the world. Many Latter-day Saints believe this vast reservoir of material will provide the basis for a millennium of work in which families throughout the world will be identified and eternal family relationships established. In a quiet fashion, the Church has pursued a record-gathering effort unparalleled in the history of the world.

The timing of the microfilming project was perfect. World War II spurred the development of microfilm technology, demonstrated the need to protect records, and depleted the monetary resources of European archives. The Society brought the technology, offered to do what the archives wanted to have done, and offered to do it at no cost to the archives. The financial support of the First Presidency was crucial in enabling the Society to make such financially unprofitable contracts. Hesitant at first to fund a program whose cost appeared astronomical, the First Presidency supported it with unexpected generosity when later they saw its worth to the spiritual purposes of the Church. That support has been sustained for over fifty years.

Religious opposition might have abruptly terminated filming in many places, but civil control of many religious records made



In order to be filmed at Torre Pellice in 1948, the records from Pramol Parish, a Vaudois hamlet in northwestern Italy, were brought down the mountainside on a mule. Archibald Bennett stands in the background. Courtesy Delbert and Barbara Roach.

it possible for the Society to obtain permission to microfilm. To archivists, the benefit of preserving the record at no cost to them was significant. As important as these circumstances were, the success of the program was due to the vision and determination of committed individuals who worked more for a cause than for a salary. Underpinning the whole microfilming project was the religious goal shared by those involved in the work.

In a letter to Elder Mark E. Petersen in 1957, L. Garrett Myers summed up the progress of record gathering from the perspective of the Society:

> More than 20 years ago, President Joseph Fielding Smith instructed us to keep abreast of all the latest technical developments in record work. He stated that we should not only be informed of new accomplishments in this field, but that we should be leaders therein. He said that the Lord would provide ways and means to accomplish his purposes in the acquiring of records of the progenitors and kinsfolk of our people, so that the work for the salvation of the dead would go forward in an ever increasing tempo, and that custodians of great record repositories would be moved upon to make their collections available to us. This prediction has been most literally fulfilled.[119]

NOTES

[1]Statistical data presented here and elsewhere in this chapter comes from various internal reports compiled for administrative use and located in the Acquisitions Department, Family History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as FHD). See also appendix III.

[2]Genealogical Society Minutes, 27 September 1943, FHD.

[3]Ovena Jorgensen Ockey, "Survey of Genealogical Conditions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 17 (July 1926): 220–22 (hereafter cited as *UGHM*).

[4]Genealogical Society Minutes, 6 October 1936.

[5]Genealogical Society Minutes, 27 October 1936, 15 March 1938.

[6]L. Garrett Myers, oral history interview by Bruce Blumell, 1976, typescript, James Moyle Oral History Program (hereafter cited as JMOHP), Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives); L. Garrett Myers, telephone interview by Jessie Embry, 20 January 1977; James M. Black, "Microfilming Experiences of James M. Black, 1938–1972 in Service with the Genealogical Society," FHD, typescript (film 1313899), 1, 7–8. This manuscript is an excellent source of information on the microfilming program, and much of the following

material is based on this source. For some interesting background on Koehler and the origin of his interest in microfilming, see Archibald F. Bennett, *Saviors in Mount Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1960), 106–7.

[7]Archibald F. Bennett to Stake Genealogical Representatives, 12 May 1938, copy on file in Joseph Fielding Smith papers, LDS Church Archives.

[8]Archibald F. Bennett to Stake Genealogical Representatives, 17 December 1938, reproduced in *UGHM* 30 (July 1939): 190–91.

[9]Archibald F. Bennett to Stake Genealogical Representatives, 7 April 1939, copy on file in Joseph Fielding Smith papers, LDS Church Archives.

[10]Archibald F. Bennett to Stake Genealogical Representatives, 7 April 1939.

[11]In 1939, for example, permission was obtained to film the manuscript records of the early Dutch Churches of New York state as well as any records of genealogical value in the Tennessee State Library at Nashville. Negotiations were also in progress for filming certain records in Italy, as well as important manuscripts at the Bishop Museum and Archive in Hawaii. *UGHM* 30 (October 1939): 254–56.

[12]Genealogical Society Minutes, 28 November 1939, 9 April 1940.

[13]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 3.

[14]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 5.

[15]Bennett, *Saviors on Mount Zion,* 108; Kahlile Mehr, "Microfilming in the Lands of the North, 1938–1975," FHD, 1980, typescript, 2; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 4–5.

[16]Genealogical Society Minutes, 6 February 1940.

[17]Genealogical Society Minutes, 19 September, and 7 November 1939; 9 January, and 15 May 1940; Myers, interview; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 63.

[18]Genealogical Society Minutes, 31 December 1940, 5 May 1942.

[19]*Deseret News,* 4 September 1943; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 8–15; Genealogical Society Minutes, 11 January 1944.

[20]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 15.

[21]The First Presidency to Joseph Fielding Smith, 26 December 1940, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD; Genealogical Society Minutes, 14 January 1941. These sources suggest that Joseph Fielding Smith himself, even though he was president of the Society, agreed with the First Presidency's reservations.

[22]Genealogical Society Minutes, 14 January 1941.

[23]Myers, interview.

[24]Genealogical Society Minutes, 27 August 1976.

[25]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," appendix.

[26]Genealogical Society Minutes, 15 February 1945; Frank Smith, oral history interview by Bruce Blumell, 1976, typescript, JMOHP; George Fudge, oral history interviews by George D. Durrant and John C. Jarman, 1984, typescript, copy in possession of Kahlile Mehr, 67–68; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," appendix.

[27]Myers, interview; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 5, 15–19; Genealogical Society Minutes, 28 November 1939, 9 January, and 23 October 1940, 11 December 1945, 19 February, and 16 April 1946.

[28]See Lucien M. Mecham Jr., oral history interview by Gordon S. Irving, 1974, LDS Church Archives; Genealogical Society Minutes, 17 April, and 1 September 1953, 21 November 1956, 13 March 1959, 5 and 19 February 1960; L. Garrett Myers to Church Building Committee, 10 September 1956, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD; Myers, interview.

[29]The following account of the activities of Paul Langheinrich and his associates is based on Don C. Corbett, "Records from the Ruins," FHD, typescript; "Report of Procurement of Church Records, Films, and Photocopies," Europe Manuscript History, 16 August 1945, LDS Church Archives; Rudolph K. Poecker, oral history interview by James B. Allen, 18 February 1985, typescript in possession of James B. Allen; Frederick W. Babbel, *On Wings of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972): 57–60.

[30]At least that is how it was interpreted by some of the German Saints who were involved at the time. Poecker, interview.

[31]Elder Poecker had another interesting experience in a small town on the border of East and West Germany. There he found many records behind the altar of a Lutheran church, along with a famous painting of the Last Supper. He thought he was going to be able to "rescue" the painting along with the records, but somehow the Russians arrived before his truck got there and made away with it. He did, however, save the genealogical records. Poecker, interview.

[32]At first the archive was set up at Wolfsgrün, and literally tons of records were transferred from Berlin, but in 1948 it was moved back to Berlin. Langheinrich later had an interesting tale to tell about some of the problems involved in transferring records from Berlin to Wolfsgrün. On one occasion, he and some others were taking a large truck and trailer full of books to Wolfsgrün when they were stopped by some armed Russians whose car was stalled. The Russians wanted to be towed into Leipzig, but Langheinrich suspected something was "fishy" and simply did not trust them. He looped a rope around their bumper, however, then climbed on the back of the trailer and held the rope himself (presumably looping it around some support). As they came near the service station in Leipzig, he simply let go of one end of the rope so that it slipped loose from the bumper, freeing his party from the Russians. Later, not far from their destination, the group came to a Russian sentry station with the crossbar on the gate blocking the highway. The driver somehow did not brake properly, and the heavily loaded truck crashed through the gate. After the truck stopped, the Russians in the car caught up. In addition, the guard at the gate pulled the driver from the truck, smashing him in the face. Langheinrich soon calmed the guard down, however, then found a carpenter, went into the woods, and cut down a tree from which they fashioned another crossbar. They then proceeded on their way. Corbett, "Records from the Ruins," 16–17; "Langheinrich Report."

[33]Genealogical Society Minutes, 28 May, and 6 August 1946.

[34]The renegotiation of contracts on these trips, along with other economies, saved the Society an estimated $100,000. On three successive trips in the 1950s, Myers improved arrangements with the Danish National Archives, purchased some important collections in England, and obtained permission to film records in France. Genealogical Society Minutes, 17 May 1950; L. Garrett Myers to Joseph Fielding Smith, 23 February 1960, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD. See also Myers, interview.

[35]Genealogical Society Minutes, 26 November 1946, 14 October 1947, 7 July 1948; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 19–50.

[36]Genealogical Society Minutes, 26 November 1946, 9 November 1948; Archibald F. Bennett to Alma Sonne, 13 November 1948, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD. The 1947 budget, as noted in the 1946 minutes above,

was $170,000.00. The breakdown of the 1949 budget by countries is Holland, $68,437.18; Norway, $41,898.70; Great Britain, $92,988.00; Finland and Sweden, $114,762.00; Belgium, $15,000.00; France, $15,000.00; Switzerland, $25,000.00; Germany, $150,000.00; United States, $184,514.00; and Denmark, $45,000.00.

[37]Genealogical Society Minutes, 11 January 1949.

[38]Genealogical Society Minutes, 30 December 1949.

[39]*Salt Lake Tribune,* 6 April 1954.

[40]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," appendix.

[41]Genealogical Society Minutes, 19 December 1960; L. Garrett Myers to the Budget Committee, 19 December 1960, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD; L. Garrett Myers to Mark E. Petersen, 11 January 1961, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD.

[42]Genealogical Society Minutes, 4 December 1962.

[43]Genealogical Society Minutes, 17 August 1961, 9 November 1961.

[44]James M. Black placed a huge and very interesting appendix at the end of his "Microfilming Experiences." The appendix includes copies of microfilming reports from 1938 to 1975. All of the statistics presented above and many of those given elsewhere in this chapter are taken from that source. Black listed the other nations and geographic areas represented by the vast microfilm holdings as Mexico, Great Britain (England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man), Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Belgium, Finland, Canada, Poland, Hungary, Norway, Austria, Guatemala, Argentina, Switzerland, Australia, Polynesia (Cook Island, Fiji, Samoa, French Polynesia), Italy, New Zealand (sources include Maori histories), Chile, Korea, Japan, Russia, Iceland, Caribbean (Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Martinique, Haiti), Bahamas, Philippines, Panama, Luxembourg, China, Costa Rica, Peru, Brazil, Portugal, Singapore, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and "miscellaneous" countries.

[45]Charles Hillinger, "The Mormon Files," *Sundancer* [Hughes Air West in-flight magazine] (January 1977): 46.

[46]Managing Director's minutes, 7 April 1987, FHD.

[47]Rick Ebert, Presentation to Staff, 6 February 1991, FHD.

[48]*Deseret News,* 4 November 1972.

[49]*Salt Lake Tribune,* 26 November 1953; *Denver Post,* 26 November 1953. Archibald F. Bennett simply labeled the charge "ridiculous" and pointed out that "the practice of collecting genealogy of church members was started in 1840. . . . The procedure not only predates Communism, but certainly predates the current world situation."

[50]The proclamation actually provides a fitting summary of what the microfilm program did for various states. It reads:

> WHEREAS, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) have now finished their project of microfilming the records of the towns, cities and courts of Massachusetts; and WHEREAS, These records are the irreplaceable early to the year 1850 records [*sic*]; and WHEREAS, The filming of these important records of the states' cities towns [*sic*] and courts was done at no expense to the state or the towns, cities and courts; and WHEREAS, Free copies of these microfilmed records have been given to the state, towns, cities and courts; and WHEREAS, Our own native son Robert J. Tarte of Ashland has been

the Microfilm Coordinator of this great project for his Church; and WHEREAS, Our great Commonwealth would like to express a feeling of gratitude toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) and its microfilm coordinator Robert J. Tarte, NOW, THEREFORE, I, MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim July 15, 1975, as MORMON RECORD DAY and urge the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to take cognizance of this event and to participate fittingly in its observance. Copy on file at the FHD.

[51]*Deseret News,* 22 November 1968.

[52]See Genealogical Society Minutes, 18 February 1947, 5 October 1948; Myers, interview. According to the minutes, Elder Smith was convinced that the Church need not be as much concerned with countries such as Ireland, France, Spain, and Italy as with other European countries, for he did not think there were as many descendants of Israel in those countries. Certainly they did not provide the large numbers of early converts to Mormonism as did England, northern Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. Significantly it was in the latter areas that microfilming was done most extensively at first.

[53]Genealogical Society Minutes, 24 August 1961.

[54]George Fudge, oral history interview by Bruce Blumell, 1976, typescript, JMOHP.

[55]Genealogical Society Minutes, 2 January 1962.

[56]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 80. This document is confusing at this point, for Black mistakenly penciled in the notation that Elder Tanner appointed him in 1962. However, Elder Tanner did not begin his administration of the Society until 1963.

[57]Genealogical Society Minutes, 21 January 1965.

[58]Information summarized from Acquisition Planning Committee Minutes, various dates from 1971 to 1979, FHD.

[59]"Ten-Year Genealogical Records Gathering Project Plan," typescript attached to Management Meeting Minutes, 14 September 1981, FHD; "Philosophy of Records Gathering," typescript attached to Micrographics Division Managers Council Meeting Minutes, 25 January 1982, FHD. The rule of 75 percent was later changed to 80 percent.

[60]Micrographics Standing Committee Minutes, 29 December 1981, FHD.

[61]The following information is based on the personal knowledge of Kahlile Mehr, who was involved in all these activities.

[62]Some information not specifically documented in this and later sections is based on the personal knowledge of Kahlile Mehr, who had discussions with various Genealogical Society administrators over time, who was personally involved in some of the events and programs discussed, and who has studied the various internal reports of the Department that are compiled for official use only.

[63]Genealogical Society Minutes, 18 September 1957, 26 February 1958, 28 June 1960.

[64]Genealogical Society Minutes, 19 February 1960, 26 April 1960, 24 May 1960, 3 February 1961; personal knowledge of Kahlile Mehr, based on discussions with various Genealogical Society administrators.

[65]Mark Bell, "Microfilm Acquisition of Genealogical Records in Europe, circa 1975–1984," FHD, typescript, 2.

[66]L. Garrett Myers to Joseph Fielding Smith, transcription of letter in Genealogical Society Minutes, 19 July 1950.

[67]Genealogical Society Minutes, 1 November 1957.

[68]*Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Telegram,* 1 February 1954.

[69]These requirements included the following:

> (1) The vault is to be within a 25 mile radius from the Church Administration Building. (2) The film storage area . . . is to have a minimum of 30,000 sq. ft. expandable to 58,000 sq. ft. and about 28,000 sq. ft. for offices, laboratories, mechanical equipment and service features. (3) Air temperatures are to be held within 65° to 72°, and relative humidity is to be held within 40 to 50 percent. (4) The air is to be filtered to remove any dust or chemicals. (5) The storage vault area is to have an overburden of soil or rock at least 250 feet in depth. (6) Other factors to be considered in evaluating a suitable site are: a) Accessibility from downtown Salt Lake City. b) Availability of water, sewer and electric power. c) Characteristics of earth or rock formation at the site which would have a direct bearing on first costs at time of construction, and upon maintenance and operation costs thereafter.

Handout provided by the Genealogical Society entitled "Church Records Vault," FHD.

[70]Myers, interview; Genealogical Society Minutes, 7 February 1958; Myers to Howard Barker, 10 February 1958, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD; "The *Era* Asks: What Is the Granite Mountain Records Vault?" *Improvement Era* 69 (August 1966): 699 (interview with Elder Theodore M. Burton).

[71]Genealogical Society Minutes, 13 March 1959.

[72]Genealogical Society Minutes, 14 January 1964.

[73]*Church News,* 7 December 1963.

[74]See "Records Protection in an Uncertain World," pamphlet published and distributed by the Genealogical Society of the Church, 1975.

[75]Ted Powell, telephone conversation with Kahlile Mehr, 11 October 1993.

[76]Historical Report, April 1982, FHD.

[77]Memorandum, May 1991, FHD.

[78]Genealogical Society Minutes, 15 August 1952.

[79]Genealogical Society Minutes, 13 August 1958.

[80]Genealogical Society Minutes, 5 February 1960.

[81]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 116–17.

[82]Burton, interview; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 132.

[83]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 133.

[84]Burton, interview; Fudge, 1976 and 1984 interviews; Ted F. Powell, oral history interview by Jessie Embry, 7 March 1977, LDS Church Archives.

[85]Micrographics Division Historical Report, September 1982, FHD.

[86]Historical Report, January 1983, FHD.

[87]Micrographics Division Historical Report, December 1983, FHD.

[88]Rick Laxman, telephone conversation with Kahlile Mehr, 14 January 1994.

[89]The small screen size of a microfiche reader does require that a large document be read in pieces when the image is returned to its original dimensions.

[90]These interviews are part of the Family History Library collection.

[91]Historical Report, July 1979, FHD.

[92]Micrographics Division Historical Report, August 1981, FHD.

[93]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 64.

[94]Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 73.

[95]Historical Report, August 1976, FHD.

[96]References scattered throughout the Genealogical Society correspondence, and a summary of some of the negotiations found in "History of Microfilming Project, Chile" (n.d.), Henry Christiansen files, FHD, typescript; Black, "Microfilming Experiences," 143–55.

[97]Historical Report, November 1979, FHD.

[98]Historical Report, June 1980.

[99]Historical Report, June 1983.

[100]Genealogical Society Minutes, 13 March 1959.

[101]Micrographics Standing Committee Minutes, 15 August 1981, FHD.

[102]Mel Thatcher, "An Overview of Genealogical Acquisitions in the People's Republic of China," 1–3, Genealogical Society Minutes, 10 April 1986.

[103]Historical Report, May 1981, FHD.

[104]Thatcher, "An Overview of Genealogical Acquisitions in the People's Republic of China," 3, 4, 5, 6.

[105]Ted Powell, oral history interview by Ron Watt, 24 May 1982, 8–9, LDS Church Archives.

[106]Genealogical Society Minutes, 25 April 1952.

[107]Genealogical Society Minutes, 10 September 1952.

[108]Genealogical Society Minutes, 24 April 1951.

[109]Genealogical Society Minutes, 18 January 1952.

[110]Dean Hunter, "Summary of Filming—Great Britain—1986 to 1992," FHD, typescript, 1, 4; Genealogical Society Minutes, 11 February 1993.

[111]Genealogical Society Minutes, 15 August 1951.

[112]Genealogical Society Minutes, 12 August 1952.

[113]Genealogical Society Minutes, 26 February 1958, 5 February 1960; *Salt Lake Tribune,* 27 March 1963; Mehr, "Microfilming in the Lands of the North." Mehr's short essay provides a summary of what was happening in Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries, in this period.

[114]Genealogical Society Minutes, 13 August 1958.

[115]Mark Bell, "Microform Acquisition of Genealogical Records in Europe, circa 1975 to 1984," FHD, typescript, 8.

[116]Management Meeting Minutes, 11 February 1982.

[117]Genealogical Society Minutes, 2 July 1957, 1 November 1957.

[118]Genealogical Society Minutes, 17 March 1961.

[119]L. Garrett Myers to Mark E. Petersen, 11 March 1957, Genealogical Society correspondence, FHD.