

Family Land and Records Center in Nauvoo

*A new and rapidly expanding research center
contains many one-of-a-kind documents concerning
1840s residents of Nauvoo, Iowa, and Illinois.*

Susan Easton Black

Researchers seeking either data for demographic studies or facts about a specific person who lived in Iowa or Hancock County, Illinois, from 1839 to 1845 can consult the Family Land and Records Center.¹ Initially established to help visitors locate their ancestors, this research center in the LDS Nauvoo Visitors' Center contains numerous documents gathered by Nauvoo missionaries. Each record is classified under one of three main headings—Nauvoo; Hancock County, Illinois; and Iowa—and then under a general sub-heading and a specific file title. This note gives a brief, descriptive listing of the documents available under those headings.

The record titled Nauvoo Temple Ordinance Data contains, among other files, the “Nauvoo Index of Baptisms for the Dead,” which lists those who participated in vicarious baptisms for their ancestors from 1840 to 1845. The Nauvoo Property Records give information regarding subdivision lots, tract lands, and streets; for example, “Nauvoo Blocks and Streets” lists residents by year and block. Modern street coordinates are given to clarify block locations. Documents filed within the Nauvoo Tax Records supply a record of delinquent taxes due in the Nauvoo Third Ward from 1843 to 1845. The Nauvoo Census Records contain files like the “Nauvoo LDS Census 1842,” which lists Church members who arrived in Nauvoo after 1841. Their residential location within the city’s nine block radius and their placement in the first four Nauvoo wards are specified.

Biographical Information on LDS Nauvoo Residents is another accessible record. Included in this collection is "Nauvoo Pioneer Occupations." This file gives an alphabetical listing of pioneers who established an industry on their property. The Nauvoo Burial Records contain items such as "Old Cemetery Records of Nauvoo," which describes the location and acreage of each Nauvoo cemetery and lists the deceased buried there.

Over two hundred Nauvoo journals and autobiographies are available in the Nauvoo Electronic Database Collection. Additional files such as the "Daily Log of Persons Entering Nauvoo" are part of this database. Other records, which are not accessible from the database at this time, have been titled Source Documents Prepared for Electronic Entry. These documents include the "Nauvoo Masonic Proceedings and the "Nauvoo Municipal Court Docket." For the Nauvoo-Specific Dissertations and Theses Record, over thirty biographical, historical, and doctrinal dissertations and theses have been donated by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University. The Records of Prominent Religions in the Nauvoo Area contain such files as "St. Peter and Paul Records of the Catholic Church, 1849-1988," which lists information about the local members of the Catholic Church during that time period.

The department's second area covers Hancock County, Illinois. Here, in the Hancock Property Records, are files such as the "Maps of Mormon Settlements in Hancock County." The assortment of maps identifies LDS residencies in Hancock County by range, section, and lot. Also available are the Hancock County Tax Records. "Tax Assessments of 1840, 1842, 1849, and 1850" lists for property plots the owners, assessments, description, township, range, and value. The "Hancock County, Illinois, Census of 1850," contained in the census records, lists head of household, spouse, children, place of birth, and occupation. Other records include Biographical Information on Hancock County Residents, specifically the file "Biographies of Early Settlers of Hancock County Illinois." These biographies are records by or about settlers who resided in the county from 1839 to 1846. Marriage and Cemetery Records also supply information about the residents of Hancock County. The "Hancock County Cemetery Lists" supplies a brief descriptive

history of each cemetery and provides a list of graves, plot maps, and tombstone inscriptions.

The third area in this collection involves Iowa. The listings in the LDS Iowa Records include the file "Bear Creek, Iowa Branch," an account of the members in and minutes of that branch. Iowa State Records enable patrons to access "Maps of Iowa Mormon Trail," which give a graphic illustration of the movement of the Saints across the Iowa trail.

The Family Land and Records Center specializes in genealogical and demographic sources on the Saints in Nauvoo and contains additional records on Illinois and Iowa. The Center houses two hundred binders of rare documents and 167,000 pages of other documents. Many of the documents in this collection are unique due to their unusual acquisition—the documents were gathered locally in the Nauvoo area. The Center also invites contributions of documents in order to establish a more complete database of the early Saints' experiences. Some records, such as Property Identification Files, are available at the Center on an electronic database system.

From January through October 1995, 11,200 patrons visited the Center. To accommodate the growing number of patrons, plans are being made to build a new Family Land and Records Building next to the Nauvoo Visitors' Center. Those interested in this area of Church history are encouraged to utilize the resources available. Inquires about this collection can be made to the Family Land and Records Office, Nauvoo Visitors' Center, P.O. Box 215, Nauvoo, IL 62354; (217) 453-2233.

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NOTE

¹The Family Land and Records Center is also known as the Nauvoo Family History and Property Identification Department. Dell Van Orden, "Walking in Nauvoo Ancestors' Steps," *Church News*, September 22, 1990, 11.