



## ***PAF Express***

*Washington County PAF Users Group  
From September 2005 Newsletter*

### **A New Face For FamilySearch**

From Kimberly Powell,  
Your Guide to Genealogy.- Stay up to date!  
September 09, 2005

Much of the buzz at the FGS Genealogy Conference this week is focused on the new direction that FamilySearch - the Family History arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - is taking. A new design for their Web site homepage, launched earlier today, is just one of many exciting changes in store.

Changes to the FamilySearch Web site, at least for now, are mostly to look and navigation. In other words, the wealth of resources already available is now much easier to find and explore.

The most exciting for genealogists is the progress that FamilySearch is making on digitizing their entire microfilmed collection of family history records. That's more than 2.3 million rolls of microfilm, the equivalent of about 6 million 300-page volumes! They have spent tremendous amounts of money, time, and resources on the necessary equipment and staff for this project, known as ScanStone, and by the end of this year hope to have their digitizing up to the rate of 32 million images per month, approximately 370,000 rolls of microfilm per year. At that amazing rate, the entire collection of the Family History Library could be available online in digital format in as few as six years!

But what good are all those amazing records without an easy way to find what you're looking for. Even with a high-speed Internet connection, most of us just don't have the kind of time to dig through that much data page by page. This is where the FamilySearch Indexing project comes in. They have created software, which makes it easy for societies, groups, and even individual volunteers to extract the important key information out of a document to be included in the growing index. The software is very user friendly. I got a chance to try it out today. As you tab through the entry fields in the transcription box, the section of the digitized document where the information can be found is highlighted. In the case of commonly used terms and names, such as county names, or race selections, the choices are presented in a drop-down format. Specific instructions for each step tell you what to enter, and what to do if no information is included in that field on the original document. Each record will also be indexed by at least two unrelated individuals. If the computer finds a disagreement between the two, the record will go out to a third individual for clarification. This should help eliminate some of the human error that always creeps into such indexing projects.

The documents for the FamilySearch Indexing Project will be provided in digital format by FamilySearch to the volunteers. They also hope to link up volunteers to records in their area of specialty or interest. It's much more fun to volunteer to index records if you're interested in the records for your own research! The plans for this major undertaking will begin with records, which aren't currently available in indexed format anywhere. Some of the ones under consideration include U.S. State Vital Records, Vital Records from Canada and the Pacific, British Parish Registers, and Vital and Census Records from South America.

FamilySearch has also started digitizing published family histories, beginning with the ones, which are already out of copyright. There are 5,000 already available online, made available through the Web site of Brigham Young University (BYU). These can be accessed through the Family History Library Catalog - do a search by "Title" for the individual or family name which interests you. Alternatively, you can access the collection directly at the Family History Archive on BYU's Web site.

If that's not enough great news, they also are participating in an Austro-Hungarian Map Project, hoping eventually to include links from all ancestral birthplaces in the Family History Library Catalog to digitized historical Austro-Hungarian maps.

And for you PAF users, the rumors of its demise are just that - rumors. FamilySearch will continue to support the software and plan to continue as an important part of their suite of family history tools.

© WC-PUG. PO Box 910187, St. George, UT 84791  
dixielarsens91@skyviewmail.com