

Mormon Pioneer Genealogy Library Acquired by NEHGS

by Michel L. Call and Gary Boyd Roberts
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The Colonial American portion of the Mormon Pioneer Genealogy Library has recently been acquired by NEHGS for the benefit of its members. This marks an historic moment for both NEHGS and the Mormon people. Most of the largest Mormon pioneer families (the founders of Utah in the 1840s) have ancestral roots in New England. Three of the first four Church presidents and the parents of the fifth were natives of this region, and six of the remaining eight presidents also have considerable New England ancestry.

NEHGS was formed in 1845, just two years before the main body of Mormons went west to Utah. Until recently both groups operated independently, although both were deeply involved in genealogy and much Mormon research concerned New Englanders. Of the 100 largest Mormon pioneer families, 61 originated in New England, 34 were mid-Atlantic or southern, and 5 were from England or Scotland.

The Mormon Pioneer Genealogy Library (henceforth MPGL) contains about 15,000 pedigree charts and 35,000 family group sheets. About two-thirds of the library -- the American portion, covering Mormon pioneers born in the U.S. or Canada -- has been acquired by NEHGS. The library contains the known ancestry, to roughly 1500, of the 10,000 Mormon pioneers with the largest posterities in the Church today. It represents a massive organization and recording of information available in Salt Lake City, as submitted by Church families and gleaned from the family group sheet archives and other files. It has also been updated with thousands of additions and corrections not available in the Salt Lake library, from professional genealogists and family representatives in the Church.

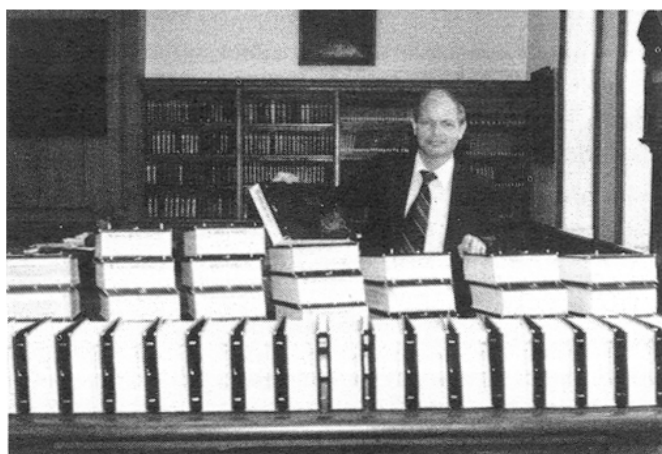
In a special lecture at NEHGS on May 11, 1985, Michel L. Call, compiler of MPGL, noted that one of the greatest problems in contemporary genealogy is duplication of effort. The problem is not limited to Mormons but is common to everyone with New England ancestry. A few examples will suggest both this problem's magnitude (the extent to which the same New England ancestry is shared by millions of Americans) and the consequent centrality to genealogical studies generally of MPGL and a few scholarly studies of the last half century.

According to MPGL projections, the largest family in America today is the posterity of Robert White (b. ca. 1560) & Bridget Allgar, with a Mormon posterity of 450,000 and an American posterity of 29 million. The next five families are Edward Griswold and Margaret, Joseph Loomis and Mary White (daughter of Robert and Bridget above), Gerard Spencer and Alice Whitbread, Thomas Ford and Elizabeth Charde, and Thomas Bliss and Margaret Hulins, each with a Mormon posterity of 270,000 and an American posterity of 18 million. All six of these colonial families are ancestral also to two couples whose ancestry has been well studied in classic multivolume compendia -- (1) Rufus Dawes (born 1838 in Ohio) and his wife Mary Beman Gates (born there in 1842) and (2) Frederick Chester Warner (born 1886 in Massachusetts) and his wife Anna Nellie Harrington (born 1886 in Kansas).

Of the 50 largest American families, each with posterities of at least 9 million, 26 are ancestral to Michel L. Call (compiler of MPGL); 37, to his children; 28, to the Warner-Harrington family; 17, to the Dawes-Gates family; 38, to at least one U.S. president; and 15, to two or more presidents. Most early American colonists with sizable posterities are ancestral to one or more large Mormon pioneer families and thus included in MPGL. Of the 23 Mayflower sires, 20 are covered in the library. Richard Warren is the Pilgrim with the largest posterity -- 200,000 Mormons and 14 million Americans.

The 100 largest American families all originated in New England. Immigrants to the mid-Atlantic or southern states came a generation or more later and left much smaller posterities. Furthermore, southern records are relatively scarce, and fully known southern ancestry is rare. Of the 100 largest Mormon pioneer families, the 61 from New England have an average of 173 known post-1500 ancestors; the 34 from the mid-Atlantic and southern states, only 32.

New England ancestry is thus widely shared by contemporary New Englanders, by Mormons in the West, and by descendants of other nineteenth century pioneers. All of these groups would benefit enormously by distilling and sharing sizable quantities of the data they have collected, and it was with this aim in mind that the Mormon Pioneer Genealogy Library was acquired by NEHGS. This library brings together the best research by the Mormon people on those forebears they share with many other Americans. When additional updating is completed in the near future, incorporating a review of the best scholarly literature which Mr. Call has undertaken over the past three years, assisted by scholars at NEHGS, the library will also reflect much of the best work of the genealogical community.



CHURCH NEWS ● WEEK BEGINNING JULY 28, 1985

Michel L. Call arranged for pioneer library to be acquired by New England organization.



North America Northeast Area **Genealogy library acquired**

BOSTON, MASS. — The oldest and most prestigious genealogy organization in the country recently acquired the colonial American portion — about 10,000 pedigree charts — of the Mormon Pioneer Genealogy Library. Most of the largest Mormon pioneer families have New England roots. Cooperation between the two organizations “will benefit Mormons and New Englanders enormously,” said Michel L. Call, library compiler.