

Tracing Pasts: LDS Web site has hard-to-find records

December 18, 2008 10:47:00 AM

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Genealogist Linda Pazics Kleback formerly was a researcher at the Bay County Public Library. She now lives in Maryland.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been a friend of genealogists for many years. They have made their records available to all, and their holdings are amazing.

Through hundreds of local family history centers, they offer microfilm and microfiche access to those of us not able to visit Salt Lake City. Their dedication to microfilming original records worldwide has preserved and made available many sources that we might never have seen. I was able to research several generations of my Pazics and Lukacs/Lukasenya families from Slovakia at the Family History Center at 3140 State Ave. in Panama City, using films of parish registers. How great is that? (For other locations, go to

http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp

This organization has continued to evolve with the times. They are digitizing many records now. They also have established a great indexing program that lets us participate.

I want to share information on their new Record Search - Pilot Site at

<http://pilot.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html#p=0>. A friend who is a very experienced genealogist told me about this and said she'd found ancestors new to her. I tried it and had good luck as well.

The Web site says Record Search is still under development and sometimes won't be available as they add additional records and improve features. You can search millions of indexed records. You can browse images waiting to be indexed. You also can volunteer to do some indexing yourself.

If you go to View All Collections, you can see what has been completed or is in progress. I found a death certificate for a Pazics/Pazich relative in a search that before had hit a brick wall. I also was able to print out some Texas death certificates I needed. All of these were free.

If you need an escape from holiday hustle and bustle, give yourself some time at the computer trying the Record Search - Pilot Site. After all, don't we all want to find a new ancestor for Christmas?