

## Original Documentation

When a person enters the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City for the first time, one generally doesn't know just exactly where to start. If this were a normal library there would be a large empty entrance hall with a list on the wall which would indicate where to find the various collections in the building. But in this library the entrance foyer always has at least three or four elderly missionaries just waiting there, watching for just such an unwary traveler, lost and confused, and when they wander in they are immediately descended upon as if to become the next victim of this gang of thugs who are continually laying in wait. I remember clearly the first time I went there. Although I wasn't really mugged or thugged, I was rushed into the adjoining room where I was promptly given the standard introduction to the library and shown a short video. After that, one of the missionaries took me into the main floor and sat me down at one of the computers. This (I have come to realize) is standard procedure for all newbies who enter. After a few minutes at the computer, we were able to bring up several records of the Wald family. While inspecting these records and after considering several other records in the FHL collection, I eventually came to realize that there were many inconsistencies and some obvious errors, and there was certainly not a lot of correlation between the records from the FHL and the records that I had received from my grandparents.

And so this is how I came to begin my research—with the realization that there were way too many mistakes already within the records. I determined to uncover the truth of the matter if it was possible. As I continued to visit the library during the next several months, I was continually frustrated by the computerized records kept by the church. It turns out that several different individuals had contributed to those records over the years. In fact, many deceased individuals had been represented two or three or even four times, all with different birth dates and different birth places etc. Although this is not at all unusual, it is confusing to someone who is just beginning their research. Since then I have learned that computers, although great tools that they are, contain only information that has been put there by some person. In the case of the FHL databases, that information unfortunately contains absolutely no supporting documentation of the original sources that could help a researcher sort through all of the problems.

It is the search for the original documents that I then determined to pursue. I recall the first truly original document that I found. My father, Fred Wald, was there with me that day. We had found a mention of a marriage record in grandma Wald's notes, and we went down to the international floor of the library to look up this record. The record, which is shown below, is the marriage record of our great great great grandparents Ole Iversen and Siri Pedersdatter. I recall clearly that we suffered quite a difficulty actually finding the document. The record we were seeking was originally recorded in the church book of the Aardal Lutheran parish of Rogaland county in south Parish records from Årdal, Rogaland, Norway: "# 7: young man Ole Iversen Volden age 22 years, maiden Siri Pedersdatter Hagen, age 22 years, sponsors: Daniel and Ole Kirkhuus, date: November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1830, married in the church."

western Norway. These books contained several hundred pages of records, and they are kept at the FHL on 35 mm films. Not only did we not even know how to put the film in the viewing machine, but we didn't have a clue how to find the actual pages containing this specific marriage among the hundreds of other records on the film. To top it off, that entire set of records was written by hand in the Norwegian language as are nearly all of the church records from the 17th century. Never before had I felt so completely unable. These records seemed so unfathomably lost to antiquity, and the task of deciphering such documents seemed utterly confusing and hopeless. Nevertheless, the library has people who helped us, and eventually we found the correct pages and managed to make copies and got help with the translation.



and I was relying heavily on the help at the library. Then there was one day when I looked at a certain document and I realized that I understood the translation—and I knew that my interpretation was correct! This was like a moment of awakening for me because I had previously been so confused by the new language. Many ancient Norwegian words are not even the same words or spelled the same as the words that they use today. It's like reading Shakespear's English, only this time it's not in English and it's also hand written in an ancient and antiquated script. But almost as if a light just came on I realized that I could understand what was written and that I would not always be confused by this new research. I have never learned to speak another language, and even now, ten years later, I can hardly speak or even understand a word of Norwegian when spoken. Nevertheless, I am able to understand the written language to a great degree. This is not to say that I haven't had to study and continue to learn new words, but I believe that it was on that day that I was blessed with the gift of the interpretation of tongues as spoken of by the prophet Moroni (see Moroni 10:8-18). It turns out that many Norwegian words are identical to English words, but they are just spelled differently. Thus many words can be translated directly by reading them phonetically. However, to speak those same words is a whole different problem. Norwegian is also somewhat more simple without a lot of the extraneous words that we love to use in English to help a sentence 'sound' right. So, with a vocabulary of two or three hundred words I began a serious study of our Norwegian family history. And what an amazing history we have found as it continues to unfold.

Below is a copy of the birth record for Siri Pedersdatter Hagen, # 62.<sup>29</sup> Hagen is the place where her family lived. It means: a hill or a knoll or mound. See if you can pick out the names of her parents which are given in the record.

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29 FHL film # 0126128, Aardal parish records, Aardal, Rogaland, Norway.