

# Family History Centers: Visited One Lately?

I AM WRITING THIS as I once again spent part of today at my local Family History Center (FHC). I don't get there as often as I used to and I really should get there and use its resources more! And, when I mention about using microfilm at an FHC, I am often greeted with a blank stare. I find that there are so many genealogy researchers, whether beginners or more advanced researchers, who are not aware of and/or have yet to make use of renting and viewing microfilmed records at their local FHC. You might be doing your research a disservice by overlooking this affordable (it typically costs about \$5.50 USD to rent a microfilm) means of gaining access to microfilmed copies of original records.

I first visited a Family History Center back in 1988 — in the wilds of New Jersey. One evening, every week or so, I would trek "over the hills and through the woods" to do this thing called genealogy, leaving my husband to entertain himself back at our apartment.

This was the place where I rented all the microfilms for the Ylistaro Parish Church, Vaasa Province, Finland (and many for the nearby Soini Parish). Using my rudimentary Finnish word guides and related word lists, I learned all about my Kujanpaa, aka Lammi, ancestors back to the time when the Parish was founded and the

One of the first records that the author explored at an FHC in New Jersey in the late '80s — a 1792 Communion Book For Ylistaro Parish, Finland.

first ancestor was in the area. I looked into baptism, marriage and burial records, "moving in and out" records, communion records, census records and whatever records made sense to me at the time — all written in Finnish or Swedish. This initial, slow-going and yet satisfying research was validated when, many years later, by the early 2000s, many Parish records were transcribed, and I was able to verify my findings and

add in a few missing family members. This article contains two such images of early documents, though these were not consulted for a few more years, since all my initial research were handwritten transcriptions of the microfilmed records — there was no way to make copies at the time.

These, and many more finds like these, sparked a love affair with renting microfilm of original records from Family History Centers.

With the increased digitizing of records becoming available via FamilySearch Labs, commercial service websites and elsewhere, it has become easier for people to "decide to just sit back and wait until the records they need are digitized." Not to be too blunt, but I'm not counting on that necessarily happening in my lifetime (there are some records that won't ever be digitized). Also, many

projects that I am working on for clients (or myself) need to be done sometime this year and not "down the road". And finally, for some projects, it is not possible to gain access to records unless you live locally — with budget shortfalls, many local libraries, government repositories and genealogy/history societies are not able to provide any support to genealogy researchers, even when you offer to pay!

34.

*Admitterade år 1869.*

By	Page nummer	Flickorn	Tidspunkt av Datum	30th	Attityd	Tidens Catholick Kyrklig Kyrklig	Spars märk	Fiel märk
Yläne		Lyyra, Anna Lena Maria dotter	21/851	Y	Y	Y Y Y	Y 6	
Pontinen		Lena Erikdotter	9/1853	X	Y	Y Y Y	Y 6	7
Pohjasmäki		Maja Kristina Erikdotter	27/852	X	X	X X X	Y 6	7
Wärtsilä		Lisa Johanna	29/1853	Y	Y	Y Y Y	Y 6	
Niemi		Lena Maria dotter	16/1859					

Another early record found: An 1869 Baptism for Anna Lena, Soini Parish, Finland.

So, if I am in a position to wait a little bit, and there is microfilm available via a FHC, I will often choose that option over hiring a local professional, though, depending on the circumstances, I will sometimes hire a local researcher instead. This means, if I cannot get to the records, I arrange for them to be "brought" to me at my local FHC. This year, I have looked at microfilms for Croatian Parish Records in advance of a client's trip to Croatia, where it was hoped that the research could be advanced — specifically, I looked at metrical books (births, marriages, deaths) for the Roman Catholic congregation at Jaszka, Kroatiens, Austria; later Jastrebarsko (aka Jaska), Zágráb, Hungary; now Jastrebarsko, Croatia (Text in Latin and Serbo-Croatian), and identified some relevant baptism records.

Besides the Croatian records mentioned above, I have also "rented" various indexes for Patterson, (Passaic County) NJ records and just today, Munsala Parish Baptism Records, Vaasa Province, Finland (though many Finnish Parish records have been transcribed and are online — not ALL records are available — in this case, the records of interest were not old enough to be part of the HisKi transcription project, <http://hiski.genealogia.fi/historia/indexe.htm>). Again, I identified a relevant

baptism and then used the records to learn more about siblings and parents.

In the past, besides extensive collections of Finnish records, I have also looked into documents written in German about what was Galicia at the time my ancestors emigrated — trying to learn about Pietrusza Wola and Deszno.

Though it is tempting to view such a low-tech means of accessing information as unnecessary in the digital age, it is just as important as always. The Internet does not have all the answers! One cannot necessarily travel to where the original records are held! Nor, can one necessarily get local assistance to view extant records. At an FHC,

#### A BIT SCARED OF LOOKING INTO NON-ENGLISH RECORDS?

You have probably noticed that many of the records that I have accessed are NOT available in English — this does not mean that you cannot look at US, UK and other records in English — it just happens that many of the projects where I am really stumped to access original records just end up being for non-English speaking countries!

For many of us, our research can sometimes quickly take us to the records for other countries, which will be written in their native tongue or possibly Latin. This can be intimidating and the perceived language barrier may cause us to pause (permanently) in our research. I have found that with a little preparation and a sense of adventure, non-English records do not have to defeat us. Many parish records were printed in

columnar books (handwritten or pre-printed) where you can fairly easily identify dates, places, forenames, surnames, etc., — enough to determine most of what is being conveyed as far as baptisms, marriages and deaths.

FamilySearch has produced a series of Research Helps, [www.familysearch.org/eng/search/RG/frameiset\\_rhelps.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/RG/frameiset_rhelps.asp), which I have used for Finnish, German and Swedish Genealogical Word Lists — these can be downloaded in .PDF. If you do not find an appropriate word list, a general internet search will reveal helpful guides — for the Serbo-Croatian documents, I made use of resources on this website, [www.croatia-in-english.com/](http://www.croatia-in-english.com/).

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you still can see microfilms of original documents, which are invaluable to one's research.

For example, for the Munsala Parish (Finnish) records, I had been in touch with a nearby Parish, Oravais (using an amalgam of English and Finnish and then English and Swedish, it ends up being a Swedish-language parish where other parishes in the Vaasa Province are Finnish-language, learned the name of the Parish Clerk for Munsala and tried to contact, writing in Swedish, said person several times. I also asked the Oravais Parish Clerk to intervene on my behalf. I was told that genealogical research is only accommodated when time permits and is not a priority for the Parish Clerk (even as a paid service). After about six months and no successful contact with the local Parish clerk, it made sense to pursue records that I knew had been microfilmed — my so-called "Plan B." The day that I first viewed the ordered microfilm, I found the baptism entry for the bride listed in this marriage record.

### ADDITIONAL INFO

- Locate Family History Centers [www.familysearch.org/Eng/library/FHC/frameset\\_FHC.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/library/FHC/frameset_FHC.asp)
- Checkout Catalog [www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHLC/frameset\\_fhlc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp)
- Don't Have Ready Access to an FHC or Just Need a Few Pages Copied? It is possible to make a "Request for Photocopies" of Census Records, Books, Microfilm or Microfiche if you have precise reference information and use this form, [www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/images/FReqMicrofilm.pdf](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/images/FReqMicrofilm.pdf)

7.10.1866

*Oravais församling  
bondes:n, ungk. Jakob Isaksson Rausk  
bonde:dren Lisa Isaks:dr Pesonen  
Pensala by*

This led to siblings and parents — I have my fingers crossed that on my next trip to the FHC, I will be able to determine grandparents, etc as I trawl backwards through the records!

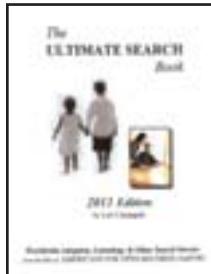
I hope that my examples encourage you to check out the

Family History Catalog and see if records that might be invaluable to your research have been microfilmed. If so, do consider this option. Though you may wait four-to-six weeks (or longer) for your microfilm to arrive at your local FHC, the minimal cost and four-week loan period definitely can make this an affordable and attractive means of gaining access to original records that may be unavailable to you otherwise. The results I achieved above either would not have been possible or the cost of hiring local research help would have been so prohibitive, that I might not today be able to write of successfully learning more about these families and places.

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*Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for over 22 years. Though she has ebbed and flowed in her usage of FHCs, they have always been an invaluable resource for her. She currently does professional research in NC and DC and can be found online at [www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy](http://www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy).*

## Internet Genealogy Library



This all new 2011 edition of Lori Carangelo's *The Ultimate Search Book: Worldwide Adoption, Genealogy & Other Search Secrets*, is the first new edition of this guide since 2002. As director of the organization Americans for Open Records, Ms. Carangelo has amassed considerable expertise in helping people, and especially birth parents, find their missing loved ones. In this textbook, she shares the secrets to successful searching with a broader audience. The first five chapters of the new edition lay out Ms. Carangelo's blueprint for successful searching. Chapter One identifies the major categories of databases that a researcher is likely to consult (DMV records, voter registrations, etc.). Chapters Two and Three home in on missing children, old loves, war buddies, child support deadbeats, and so on. Chapter Four treats missing persons whose names you may or may not have (birth children, foster care records, missing person locators), while Chapter Five concentrates on the principal websites for finding missing persons. The bulk of the book leads the reader, U.S. state by state, and then country by country through the specifics of successful searching. ISBN: 9780806355153, Item #: 9634, \$45.45 ppd.



*The Complete Beginner's Guide to Genealogy, the Internet, and Your Genealogy Computer Program. Updated Edition* shows how to combine traditional research methods in the National Archives, the LDS Family History Library, and other major resource centers with today's technology; how to conduct research in courthouse records, censuses, and vital records using techniques unheard of just a decade ago. It shows you how to get started in your family history research; how to enter information into a genealogy computer program so that you can easily manage, store, and retrieve your data; how to analyze the data and place it in various tables, charts, and forms; and how to put together a family history notebook--all the while using conventional record sources with a modern search and retrieval system. The new updated edition contains references to current URLs and databases, discusses new genealogy software options, describes the latest procedures at FamilySearch, and includes a revision of the census chapter to reflect the release of the 1930 census. This book is also designed as an instructional manual, and each chapter of the book is a self-contained teaching module. ISBN: 9780806318752, Item #: 1047, \$45.45 ppd.

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