

An Introduction to Researching Hispanic Ancestry

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Free Hispanic Genealogy Guide

<http://www.colleengreene.com/guides/hispanic-genealogy/>

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Key Eras & Dates

Helpful for determining the location and provenance of records.

- (1492) Beginning of the Spanish Colonial Period
- (1808-1833) Wars of independence in Spanish America
 - (1821) Mexican Independence.
 - (1898) Spanish American War (Puerto Rico & Cuba gain independence)
- (1906-1908) U.S. starts recording arrivals from Mexican border ports.
- (1910-1920) Mexican Revolution.
- (1917) Puerto Ricans granted U.S. citizenship
- (1953-1959) Cuban Revolution

Hispanic Naming Conventions

Helpful for identifying the various combinations of names under which to search for your ancestors in the United States and in the old country. These are generalizations.

Given Names

- The concept of middle names generally does not exist, instead, individuals have compound given names (example: Maria Hermalinda or José Pablo), but tended to go by just one of these names.
- The first part of the compound name is often a biblical or saint's name (example: Maria Hermalinda or José Pablo).
- Some names are gender neutral, but the order can provide gender clues (example: Maria Jesus is feminine, but Jesus Maria is masculine)

Surname Conventions

- **Dual Surnames:** Paternal surname, followed by maternal surname (example: Robledo Nieto or sometimes Robledo y Nieto):
 - The paternal surname is the father's paternal surname.
 - The maternal surname is the mother's paternal surname.
 - If you are not finding your ancestor, try your search using: dual surnames, paternal surname only, and maternal surname only.
 - If you are not finding your ancestor, try your search combining names with particles ("de" and "y") and articles ("la") if you have seen those grammar terms applied to your ancestor's name.
- **Women:** Wives historically did not take their husband's surnames (they retain their own paternal and maternal surname):
 - Sometimes women are identified in Mexican records and U.S. immigration and naturalization records with the preposition "de" (of) adding their husband's paternal surname to theirs (example: Maria Nieto de Robledo or Maria Nieto Compeán de Robledo).
 - If you are not finding your female ancestor, try your search using: her dual surnames, just her paternal surname, just her maternal surname; her husband's dual surnames, just her husband's paternal surname, just her husband's maternal surname; a combination of her husband's surnames and any/all of her own surnames (with/without the particles "de" and "y").

Identifying Immigrant Origins

Helpful for clues pertaining to where in Hispanic your ancestor originated, as well as when and where your ancestor entered the United States.

- United States Records: censuses, obituaries, death records, cemetery records, military records, naturalization and border crossing records
- FAN Club (Friends Acquaintances Neighbors) and Cluster research

Parish Records

Vital records created by the local Catholic parish.

- Types: Baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials
- Geographic Scope:
 - Created at the parish level, which exists under the diocese
 - Find by state > municipality > parish
- Time Scope:
 - 16th Century: Start of missions being established in New World
 - 1563: Council of Trent formalizes & standardizes Catholic record keeping
- Indexes: FamilySearch and Ancestry (not fully indexed)

- Original Records:
 - FamilySearch digitized historical record collections:
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list/>
 - Filter by Place (left sidebar): Caribbean & Central America, Mexico, South America, Continental Europe > Spain
 - FamilySearch microfilmed record collections:
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/>
 - Enter country names in Place field
 - Ancestry:
 - Search > Card Catalog: By country name
 - Search > Birth, Marriage & Death: By country name
- For U.S. states that were former Spanish colonies, these are located in various state and local repositories in those states.

Civil Registrations

Vital records created by the government.

- Types: birth, marriage, death
- Geographic Scope:
 - Created at the municipality level
 - Find by state > municipality
- Time Scope:
 - 19th Century: Post-independence from Spain (Latin America)
 - 1859: Mexican federal government started requiring
- Indexes:
 - Ancestry:
 - Mexico: fully indexed and searchable
 - Other Countries: not fully indexed
 - FamilySearch:
 - Mexico: fully indexed and searchable, but only available to LDS members or inside a FamilySearch center or affiliate library
 - Other Countries: not fully indexed
- Original Records:
 - FamilySearch digitized historical record collections:
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list/>
 - Filter by Place (left sidebar): Caribbean & Central America, Mexico, South America, Continental Europe > Spain
 - FamilySearch microfilmed record collections:
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/>
 - Enter country names in Place field
 - Ancestry:
 - Search > Card Catalog: By country name
 - Search > Birth, Marriage & Death: By country name

Census Records

Types of census records:

- Church censuses (*padrones*)
- Government censuses: national, regional, local (*censo*)

Digitized Censuses: very few are available online, even fewer are indexed.

- The 1930 Mexico National Census
 - FamilySearch: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1307314>
 - Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1771>
- My Hispanic Genealogy Guide lists Hispanic censuses available online.

Learning More

Visit my free Hispanic Genealogy Research Guide for a more comprehensive list.

Ryskamp, George & Peggy. *Finding Your Mexican Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide*. Provo: Ancestry Publishing, 2007.

Ryskamp, George R. *Finding Your Hispanic Roots*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 1997.

Brigham Young University. BYU Script Tutorial, *The Spanish Script Tutorial*. <https://script.byu.edu/> : 2019.

Gurtler, Debbie, AG. FamilySearch Learning Center, *Introduction to Hispanic Research*. <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/410> : 2019.

Cuellar, Arturo, AG. FamilySearch Learning Center, *U.S. Hispanic Immigration*. <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/481> : 2019

2021 Institute Courses (Virtual)

Texas Institute of Genealogical Research (TIGR)

- *From Spanish Rule to Republic: Research in the Lone Star State*
- June 14-18, 2021
- <https://www.txsgs.org/texas-research-institute/>

Institute of Genealogical & Historical Research

- *Fundamentals of Hispanic Genealogical Research*
- July 26-30, 2021
- <https://ighr.gagensociety.org/>