

LOS BEXARENOS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 1935
San Antonio, Texas 78297

A GUIDE TO BEGINNING HISPANIC GENEALOGY

Composed and Edited by Jesse Rodriguez

Welcome to the world of Hispanic Genealogy. You have chosen a field that can prove very enriching and that should be of great interest to you and your family. If you continue to pursue it, you can leave a proud history of your family to those that follow, and you will have charted your ancestors back for generations. You will also acquire a greater knowledge and appreciation of history and how it affected your forefathers. In many ways they contributed to and charted the course which you and your children now follow so we owe it to them and to our descendents as well to investigate and record our family's genealogical tree and history.

It is our hope that you will take this study seriously for in you lies much family history and knowledge that will surely die if you do not impart this information to others so that it can be preserved in the annals of history. This can be in the form of a book, family notes or for public consumption in libraries or genealogical forums. We beg of you to share the knowledge that you research and record with other members of your family or with individuals researching the same family lines. You will gain much through the friendships that you acquire and from the information that others will share with you. In this way, the world will become brighter for you and widen in scope so that you can appreciate how much your ancestors loved you and contributed to your well being.

We have tried to make this pamphlet simple so that anyone can understand and follow the basic guidelines normally followed by more experienced researchers. If you learn these basic techniques and use them, they will enhance and facilitate your study into the field of Hispanic Genealogy. *Feliz viaje!*

RECORDS

It is essential that we write down the information that we learn as it can be very easy to forget and by using standard formats, we can make it easier on ourselves and on others who may be assisting us to follow our progress. For your convenience we have provided you with two basic forms which all genealogists employ. To be sure, these can vary in style and content, and you may prefer to employ other forms which you may have already started, and there is no objection to their use. Still others may be computer oriented and certainly there are a number of excellent genealogical software programs available for your use. In this case we would certainly recommend programs that have GEDCOM and narrative capabilities. The important thing is to write down what you learn and that you keep these records in a safe place where they will not be destroyed or misplaced. If possible, we would advise periodically making copies of your records and keeping them at another location away from your home so that all will not be lost in case of a fire or tragedy.

WHERE DO I LOOK FOR INFORMATION

You are now ready to begin looking for data on your family and ancestors that you can record on these forms so we are listing here some suggested areas that you should research. You do not necessarily have to follow these in the order in which they are listed, but these will serve as a guide that you can follow.

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

You personally have a great deal of knowledge of your own family where you are the father or mother so you should fill in a Family Group Sheet or Record and put down the data on yourself, your spouse and your children. Do not put down information until you are absolutely sure of the exact dates, location of events and exact names of individuals. You can show nicknames, but these should be shown in quotation marks so that it will not prove misleading to others. Also please note that in the case of married women, the maiden name is always used in genealogy.

RELATIVES

If your grandparents, parents, aunts or uncles are still living, by all means call on them and tell them what you are doing and what you hope to accomplish in compiling a history of your family. Impress upon them the importance of your study and that they played an important part in the history of the family so you definitely want to include whatever information they can offer. By all means take notes or make a recording of the information they give you for it is very easy to forget if you don't put it down. Get information on the dates of births, baptisms or deaths and places where the individuals are buried. Take your time and have patience remembering that in many cases some of the information you seek may have been forgotten, and it will take a little while for events to be recollected. It is possible that you may well have to make a second call or to write more than one letter if the person lives in a distant city. Be sure to ask for their assistance in offering the names of other persons who may have information.

CEMETERIES

Cemeteries are wonderful sources of history and information, and you should not overlook them. The inscriptions on monuments are very useful in giving you information on names of individuals, their dates of birth and death and perhaps the names of other close family members who may be buried on the same family plot. Take a camera along so that you can have a record of the individual and be sure to place a stick-on label on the back of the picture with the data of who the individual was and where the grave site is located.

CHURCH OF LATTER DAY SAINTS (LDS)

The Mormon Church (LDS) as a part of their religion maintain Family History Centers in most larger cities with an outstanding genealogical central library located in Salt Lake City, Utah. These libraries are primarily for their own church members but are also available to the general public at no cost. Here are housed large numbers of books, microfiches, microfilms and computer records that are available for your use or can be ordered for your use in the library for a nominal fee. These Family History Centers perform an outstanding public service and are normally run by volunteers. You will find these volunteers very helpful, but we urge you to check for the days on which they are open as the times will vary.

CENSUSES

In the United States a census has been taken every ten years, however, those taken before 1850 showed only the head of the household and the names of the other members of the family were omitted. These were shown only by age categories, hence the information contained is of limited value. In Mexico a censo (census) was taken at irregular times and these will show the family normally with their age. Another form of census taken was a padron which was a list usually of taxpayers in a given place or for a special purpose as for example a list of people in a given locality with the weapons and supplies available to each family for defensive purposes against the marauding Indians. U.S. censuses are normally available on microfilm in larger libraries and padrones are available through Mexican state archives or through the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS) Family History Centers.

CHURCH RECORDS

Many churches maintain baptismal, confirmation, marriage and interment records which are available to you usually for a small fee. In some instances the records have been transferred to a central location usually in a Diocesan or Archdiocesan city where you may either research the records yourself or apply for a specific document. There normally is a fee charged in either case. Many church records are also on microfilm and can be researched through the LDS records at a Family History Center. For specific records at these locations, you should consult the LDS Locality Catalog which will indicate to you the catalog number of the microfilm reel containing the church records you are seeking.

CITY DIRECTORIES

Most larger municipalities will have city directories in their library collections either in the form of hard copies or microfilmed records and these can be excellent sources of information as they will give you the names of the families living at each street address, what their employment was at the time the record was printed and whether the family was a property owner or was merely renting the home. Additionally maps can show you the area of the city where the address was located.

MARRIAGE DISPENSATIONS

Marriages by partners who are related by blood was and is forbidden according to church law unless permission to do so was granted before hand. The applications for such marriages can understandably be of great help in tracing your family lines so we urge you not to overlook this valuable tool. These dispensations are available on microfilm at the LDS Family History Centers and can be viewed there. Remember that if the microfilm is not readily available, it can be ordered there for a nominal fee and then viewed at a later date when the reel is available. Some of these dispensations are available in books, and we highly recommend the "Index to the Marriage Dispensations of the Diocese of Guadalajara" (2 Volumes) by Guerra, Vasquez and Vela. These books also contain Family Ancestral Charts which are invaluable tools in Hispanic genealogical research. Another excellent book is the "Sagrada Mitra de Guadalajara, Antiguo Obispado de la Nueva Galicia" (written in Spanish) by Maria de la Luz Montejano Hilton. This book will require some charting of your own in order to establish the relationship of the various family members.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES

You are urged to join a genealogical society, particularly one specializing in Hispanic Genealogy as these offer many opportunities for you to enhance your study. Many of these will offer courses on Beginning Genealogy and in more Advanced Studies such as computer classes. Attend their meetings for here you will find members with similar interests and perhaps you will even find another individual who is researching the same family lines that you are. Some genealogical societies will maintain libraries or have work sessions or sponsor trips that will surely be of value to you. In addition, many of these organizations will sell books on genealogical subjects or historical areas that will prove helpful. If possible, we also urge that you attend the state or regional conferences for here you will have access to an even greater number of books for sale, to hear learned speakers relate to subjects that will surely be of interest to you. In addition you will meet an even greater number of people with similar family interests who will be anxious to talk to you and to exchange information. The broader your scope of research, the greater will be the opportunity for you to find the information you are seeking. Do not be timid, we all went through the same stages of learning, but you can profit greatly by your association with others and perhaps you may even be able to be of assistance to a person you meet.

CIVIL BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RECORDS

In the United States these records are usually kept by the County Clerk of the specific county or parish in which the event took place. You can either visit this specific office or you can write for information. Addresses of the county clerks can be found by referring to a book entitled "The Handy Book for Genealogists" which can be found in most central libraries or at an LDS Family History Center. There is a fee for each document, and this fee is usually forfeited because of the research time involved in case the specific item is not located in their files. For this reason, it is well to furnish as much information on the event or persons involved when seeking one of these documents. In Mexico such documentation can be found in either city or state archival centers.

WILLS OR TESTAMENTOS

Wills are documents written by the deceased person in front of witnesses in which a person known as the Executor is charged with the disposition of the estate of the deceased person's estate. These documents are probated and are recorded and kept usually by the county clerk of the county or parish in which the will was probated. Where no will was made, an Administrator is appointed by the court to perform the duties that an Executor would do. Wills will usually give you the names of children or parents and their relationship to the deceased. Remember that they will probably not list deceased members of the family who have died before the will was made. In Mexico these instruments are normally kept in city or state archival records.

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

If you are not already computer oriented, we urge you to do so if at all possible for these contain access to records and to individuals on a world wide basis. Computers are available for your use at most libraries containing genealogical records as well as at the LDS Family History Centers. Don't be afraid to use these for instructions are readily available and attendants are normally available to coach you on their use. Of course, if you have a computer of your own and are already connected to the Internet, you have a tremendous number of search engines and web sites available at your fingertips, and you can literally spend days searching these sites in your quest for Hispanic genealogical family records. Another great feature of using a computer is that you can record all of your own records in the hard drive so that you can immediately printout different types of forms using your own family data which you have previously entered into the computer. A word of caution: be sure to always make a backup of your records and also to periodically send a copy of this backup to another location outside of your own home just in case of a catastrophic failure which might occur from a lightning strike, a theft or an accidental deletion of records.

CONCLUSION

We hope that these brief remarks will prove helpful to you in the search for your ancestry and that they will lead you to begin tracing your family's history. Do not be discouraged if a clue or trail turns out to be a false start. You will not always meet with success at every turn, but take advantage of every avenue that is opened to you, and you will sometimes find information where you least expect it. Remember that you are performing a very useful task, much as any historian has done in the past, and the fruits of your labor will live on in your family's history pages. We wish you well and God's speed in this all important historical work. We invite you to join our ranks and to take advantage of the many benefits offered to you within our organization. We are a non-sectarian, non-political and non-profit association of volunteer historians and genealogists, and we seek only to research our historical past and to assist others who may have the same goals. Please write to us if we can be of further service. *Hasta luego!*

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT A PEDIGREE CHART

Chart No.: Start out by numbering the first chart as "1". Subsequent charts should be numbered "2", "3". etc.

1: Start out by placing your name on this line. Note that women should always use their maiden name.

B: Write in the date of your birth expressing it thusly: 16 Sep 1928. Note that the day is always first, then the month using a 3 letter abbreviation and then the year in four digits.

P: Write in the place where the birth took place, that is the City, County (optional), State and/or Country.

M: Write in the date of your marriage expressing it thusly: 17 Aug 1948.

P: Write in the place of the marriage. You may want to also show the name of the church plus the city as this may be of interest to some.

D: Write in the date of death expressing it thusly: 27 Nov 1988.

P: Write in the place of death.

Spouse: Write in the name of your spouse, that is your husband or wife. Note that in the case of a wife, the maiden name is always used.

2: Write in the name of your father.

Write in the data that pertains to him as is shown under "1" above.

3: Write in the name of your mother. Note that the maiden name is always used.

Write in the data that pertains to her as is shown under "1" above.

Note that Nos. "4" and "5" are the parents of "2" and that Nos. "6" and "7" are the parents of "3" and so on.

Prepared by: Place your name and address (and telephone no. if desired) in this block.

Cont __: Place the number of the page on which you are continuing that family line.

Pedigree Chart

26 Aug 2001

Chart no. _____
No. 1 on this chart is the same
as no. _____ on chart no. _____

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| | | | | | 8 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 9 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 10 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 11 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 12 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 13 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 14 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| | | | | | 15 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ cont. _____ |
| 2 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | | | | 4 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | |
| | | | | 5 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | |
| 1 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | | | | 6 B: _____ P: _____ M: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | |
| Spouse | | | | 7 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | |
| 3 B: _____ P: _____ D: _____ P: _____ | | | | | |

Prepared by: _____

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT A FAMILY GROUP SHEET OR RECORD

Husband: Write in the name of the husband in the family.

Birth: To the left of the vertical line, write in the birth date, expressing it thusly: 16 Sep 1928. To the right of the vertical line, write in where the birth took place.

Chr: To the left of the vertical line, write in the date of the Christening or Baptism if applicable, to the right of the vertical line, write in the name of the church or city where the Christening or Baptism took place.

Death: To the left of the vertical line, write in the date of death thusly: 27 Nov 1988. To the right of the vertical line, write in the place of the death. In addition to the city you may want to use the exact place, for example, the name of the hospital.

Burial: To the left of the vertical line, write in the date of the burial and to the right of the vertical line, write in the name of the cemetery and the city.

Marriage: To the left of the vertical line, write in the date that the marriage took place expressing it thusly: 17 Aug 1948. To the right of the vertical line, write in where the marriage took place. You may want to be exact by giving the name of the church, the courthouse, etc.

Father: Write in the name of the husband's father.

Mother: Write in the name of the husband's mother.

Wife: Write in the name of the wife using the maiden name always. The maiden name would be the surname with which she was born before any marriages took place.

Fill in the balance of the information as you did for the husband.

Children: To the right of the number "1", write in an "M" for male or "F" for female, then write in the name of the child. Remember that the children are listed in the order of birth, that is, the oldest first, etc. Fill in the data for each child much as you did for the husband and wife above.

Prepared by: Write in your name and address (and telephone no. if desired).

Comments: Use this space for any short comments.

Notes: It is always useful to show on the reverse side where you obtained the information for each item.

Family Group Sheet

2 Nov 2002

Husband

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |
| Father | |
| Mother | |

Wife

| | |
|--------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Father | |
| Mother | |

Children

1

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

2

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

3

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

4

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

5

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

6

| | |
|----------|--|
| Birth | |
| Chr | |
| Death | |
| Burial | |
| Marriage | |

Prepared by:

Comments: