Essential Resources for Mexican Research
by Joy Oria
Researching ancestors in Mexican records is a deeply rewarding activity. Use the below resources to advance and illuminate your research into Mexican genealogy.

**Diccionario geográfico, histórico y biográfico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos**
by Antonio García Cubas
Once you identify a town of origin for your ancestor, look it up in Cubas' geographical dictionary for clarification and further information. He wrote five volumes of a geographical, historical, and biographical dictionary of Mexico, published from 1888 to 1891. They describe haciendas, ranchos, and towns, as well as places that may no longer appear on current maps.

**BYU Script Tutorial**
As you go back in time, the handwriting and spelling on older documents may become less recognizable. The Spanish BYU Script Tutorial is an essential tool for deciphering these documents, as it provides unfamiliar abbreviations, spelling variations, and styles of handwriting. The given names list and the surnames list are useful for when you can only identify some letters in a name, and unable to make out the entire name. You will also benefit from a genealogical glossary, sample records with translations, and an alphabet chart showing the many ways each letter could be written. The BYU Script Tutorial is also available for other languages.

**Finding Your Mexican Ancestors: A Beginner’s Guide**
by George and Peggy Ryskamp | Clayton call number: R996 MEXICO

**Tracing Your Hispanic Heritage**
by George R. Ryskamp | Clayton call number: R996 SPAIN
Finding records is a challenge within itself, but understanding the records is crucial. Use the two books listed above, by esteemed genealogist Ryskamp to understand a record's context. Anytime I have a question about records, I consult these books. Here’s an example of phrases commonly seen in baptism records – hijo natural (natural child) and hijo ilegítimo (illegitimate child). They may seem similar at first glance, but Ryskamp clarifies that hijo natural denotes a child whose parents could be married in the church but are not, and hijo ilegítimo indicates the parents could not under canon law be married. Knowing these types of details raises your genealogy skills and understanding.

**Sagrada mitra de Guadalajara, antiguo obispado de la Nueva Galicia : expedientes de la serie de matrimonios extractos siglos XVII-XVIII**
by María de la Luz Montejano Hilton | Clayton call number: M775 MEXICO

**Index to the marriage investigations of the Diocese of Guadalajara : pertaining to the former provinces of Coahuila, Nuevo León, Nuevo Santander, and Texas**
by Nadine M. Vásquez | Clayton call number: I38 MEXICO V. 1, 1653-1750, V. 2, 1751-1779
These hefty tomes are very helpful in finding colonial-era marriages. They provide extracts of marriages and marriage dispensations from the 17th and 18th centuries in the Diocese of Guadalajara. Don’t be fooled by the name, the Diocese of Guadalajara at one time covered about half of Mexico, including what is now Texas. Digitized versions of the original records are available on Family Search, but they are currently unindexed, so use the above indexes to pinpoint a marriage of interest.

**Census Records for Latin America and the Hispanic United States**
by Lyman D. Platt | Clayton call number: P719 LATIN
Researchers woefully only have indexed and searchable, digital access to one national federal census of Mexico, that of 1930. The good news is other censuses for Mexico and Latin American countries are available, and the above book is your key to finding them. Listings are divided by country, then further subdivided by state or province. A list of town names follows, giving the year the census was taken and where the census can be found. For many entries, this is the FamilySearch microfilm number, which can be looked up in the FamilySearch catalog. These censuses are rarely indexed, so the researcher will
have to browse the images as if turning pages in a book. Other censuses can be found in archives, or in a few cases, transcribed in books.

Clayton Library staff is happy to assist in locating a specific book. Email us your reference questions or give us a call at 832-393-2600.

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**One-Place Studies and Genealogical Research**

by Rodney Sam

One-place studies focus on the lives of people and their families within the context of their geographical and social world historically. Instead of focusing on the line of a single family, a one-place study researches the history of a community and all the people who lived in it, within a certain time frame.

**Steps for conducting a One-Place Study:**

1. Decide on a physical or geographical boundary to research. Do you want to know the history of your hometown, the people on your street, or the ancestral church your family attended? Once you decide on a place you want to learn more about, determine the time period you want to cover.
2. Gather all information and references you can find on your place of interest that mentions people, places, and historical events. The same sources you use in genealogy are useful for anyone interested in doing a one-place study. This includes looking through newspapers, books on local history, published genealogies, marriages, deaths, birth certificates, and baptisms along with other sources of information.

The difference between doing a traditional genealogical study and a one-place study is your goal is to compile information on EVERY person who lived in the place of interest using the above sources. You will end up reconstructing family groups and creating a sort of biographical dictionary of all the residents who settled in the community. One of the valuable insights gained from this approach is by studying everyone in a place, you will uncover kinship connections between people you may never have discovered if you merely focused on one family.

Whenever we do genealogy, it is always important to realize that our ancestors had friends, neighbors, associates, and kinsmen just like you do. They attended churches, schools, and worked at the same places of employment as others in the community. Instead of doing cluster genealogy of your family and the people in their lives. Conduct a one-place study of your genealogy, which will allow you to reconstruct a micro-history of your ancestor’s community in hopes of finding connections that will solve genealogical brick walls in your research.

Click here for the website for the society for one-place studies. There you will find resources to help you get started as well as links to several examples of research projects from all over the world to inspire you.

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**Deaf Family Marriages**

by Rebecca Grimes

In 1887, Alexander Graham Bell founded the Volta Bureau located in Washington D.C. This bureau was a center of information for deaf and hard of hearing persons. Bell’s wife, Mabel Gardiner Hubbard was deaf. One of the things the Volta Bureau did was promote research into marriages of deaf persons in America. This was done by Dr. E.A. Fay who distributed questionnaires to heads of schools for the deaf, deaf couples, and family members of deaf individuals. Dr. Fay’s questionnaires have been digitized and can be found in Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition by entering “deaf family” in the card catalog keyword search feature. The database is called “U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895.”
This database contains the questionnaires, which were completed during the years 1889-1894 for persons married in both America and Canada. Information on the forms included:

- Names of husband and wife
- Whether deaf or hearing
- Age at which deafness occurred and the cause of deafness
- If attended school
- Occupation
- Details relating to the couple’s marriage (including date and place)
- Details relating to couple’s children (number deaf or hearing, names, dates of birth or death, cause of death, etc.)
- Details relating to husband’s and wife’s parents, and brothers and sisters

With this database, if you have a relative that was deaf in the years that is covered you will find a plethora of information. It is a little genealogical gold mine for family information, not only does it cover the above questions, also available is medical information on children, siblings, parents, and grandparents.

Take the time to view this database even though you do not have ancestors who were deaf or hard of hearing. It is just one of the databases you may not have been aware of on Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition. During the current pandemic, the Houston Public Library (HPL) is offering access to the Ancestry Library Edition database from home to those with an HPL MY Link library card through March 31, 2021.

P.S. - By searching Alexander Graham Bell’s name, you will come across his and his wife’s record that includes their family members. Check it out, it is an interesting find.

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Civil War: Sources in U. S. History Database Review

by Franklin Smith

This database is a Gail Primary Sources product that contains a collection of nearly 500 digitized titles selected by Albany Law School Professor Paul Finkelman. The titles selected were written between 1862 and 1929, many by soldiers telling of their own personal experiences in the war. The Civil War: Sources in U. S. History database is available both inside the library and at home with an HPL MY Link library card and PIN.

This database is great for family historians who want to understand the impact of the Civil War on their community and family, from the perspectives of civilians and soldiers adding context to a family’s social history. The collection covers an array of topics about the war from battles, political and religious aspects, to experiences of front-line soldiers. The archive provides access to a wide variety of documents that include personal narratives and memoirs, pamphlets, political speeches, sermons, songs, battles, regimental histories, and photograph albums. All sources are full text.

The site is user friendly with a simple search interface. The basic search option on the main page is searchable by keyword, or you can click on the “View all documents in this collection” link. You could also choose the advanced search option next to the first “Search” field. You then can refine your search criteria using a Boolean search and search for your terms in the entire document, as a keyword, or in the author, or title lines of the documents data. The result titles, when opened, list the relevant page and image number where the keywords are found. Click the image number to open the page to the highlighted keyword. This is found under the document view to the right of the opened document. Above the results is a small section entitled “SHOWING RESULTS FOR” and below this will be the following links “All Content Types,” “Monographs (#),” and “Manuscripts (#).” You will see both “Monographs” and “Manuscripts” if your search results are found in both types of documents, if not you will only see the one found in. The (#) will be the number of manuscripts or monographs the results are found in. Clicking on
Monographs or Manuscripts will open the results for that type of document. The all Content link is currently only showing the first few documents from the results list.

Example: I searched for Port Gibson Mississippi, site of a Civil War battle. The basic search of Port Gibson returned 40 results. For the advanced Boolean search, I used Civil War battles with the same results as the basic search. For broader terms and subjects the advanced option should narrow your search down better. The basic option works best for specific keyword searches.

We invite you to explore this resource in your family history research. For help with the database give us a call at 832-393-2600

Electronic Resources You May Have Overlooked

The Houston Public Library subscribes to nearly 150 online databases. Many of these are NOT located in the Genealogy Resources page of the HPL website. It is our goal by reviewing some of these non-genealogy databases that your research will be expanded, you will discover new sources, understand the history your ancestors were part of, and offer background information that will help you write your family story.

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