

# Resources for Genealogical Research in Guatemala and Central America.

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## Introduction:

Central American countries are linked by an undeniable pre-Hispanic, colonial, and republican past. This presentation aims to introduce digital and physical resources for genealogical research in Guatemala and Central America, with a focus on Guatemala and the General Archive of Central America (AGCA).

## Historical Context:

Civil records were established in a region where liberalism thrived in Central America and the separation of the State from the Church occurred. In this regard, FamilySearch has records in Guatemala from 1877, when they began keeping books of births, recognitions, naturalizations, marriages, deaths, divorces, etc. Similarly, in El Salvador from 1879; in Honduras depending on the location from 1881; in Nicaragua from 1879; and in Costa Rica from 1888. Currently, there are digitization projects for many of these records, so more civil registry books will be available on FamilySearch in the coming months and years.

On the other hand, speaking of parish records, it is important to mention that these records can be much older than civil records and that depending on the regions, some records have been better preserved than others. Regarding digitization, there are still dioceses that keep their parish records physically. In Guatemala, some parish records, such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, etc., began to be kept from 1581; in El Salvador from 1655; in Honduras since 1633; in Nicaragua from 1740; and in Costa Rica from 1595.

## Main Challenges:

- Deterioration of books, records, documents (due to climate, conflicts).
- Little or no digitization of archives.
- Loss or theft of documents.
- Archives (parish, municipal, historical) inaccessible to the public.

## Sources of Information:

- Civil Registers (Births, Recognitions, Naturalizations, Marriages, Divorces, Deaths, censuses, etc.).

- Parish Registers (Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, Burials or Deaths of Indians, Mestizos, Spaniards, censuses).
- Legal Records (Powers of Attorney, Wills, Protocols, Property, Lands)
- Military Records.
- Cemeteries.

### **General Archive of Central America (AGCA):**

The AGCA "is the most important archive in the Central American area. It safeguards the documentary collections of the former Kingdom of Guatemala, which included the current Central American republics of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, as well as the current Mexican state of Chiapas."<sup>1</sup>

- Pardo Catalog (21 pieces of furniture containing more than a million descriptive cards, each containing 56 identified drawers).
- General Archive of Central America Guide: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/534126>
- Civil Registry, 1877 – 2008. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1682771>
- Cleanliness of Blood 1540-1836. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1401>
- Index of Notarial Records 1887 – 1917. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/335824>
- Protocols, 1508 – 1898. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/348888>
- Lands and Properties, 1877 – 1912. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/358970>
- Censuses and Lists. [https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&query=%2Bauthor\\_id%3A276542&page=1&topic0=Census%2C+Taxation%2C+and+Voter+Lists](https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&query=%2Bauthor_id%3A276542&page=1&topic0=Census%2C+Taxation%2C+and+Voter+Lists)
- Lists, General Captaincy of El Salvador, 1731 – 1820. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/635398>
- Section of the General Archive of Central America of the Universidad Francisco Marroquín: <https://ahgua.ufm.edu/agca/>

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<sup>1</sup> Enrique Gordillo, "Guía del "Catalogo Pardo" del Archivo General de Centro América", Dirección General de Investigación, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, (<https://digi.usac.edu.gt/bvirtual/informes/puihg/INF-2002-051.pdf> : Accessed 13 May 2024).

## Archdiocesan Historical Archive:<sup>2</sup>

In FamilySearch, there is a catalog with extensive parish records that allow navigation through the different parishes of the country, except for some that have not been digitized to date.

- Parish Records 1581-1977: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1614809>
- Marriage Information 1649 - 1817 (Marriage Dispensations):  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1028038>

## General Archive of Protocols:<sup>3</sup>

Located in the courthouse tower in Guatemala City, it houses hundreds of books from deceased notaries from across the country, dating from the late 19th century to the present. Since its records are not digitized, it's important to conduct fieldwork.

Books:

- Extractos de Escrituras Públicas, Tomos I al XVI, Lic. Juan José Falla.  
<https://biblioteca.ufm.edu/opac/record/100269?&query=@biblioteca=@idioma=@material=@sortby=sorttitle@titulo=extractos%20de%20escrituras&recnum=1>

La mies es abundante – Rev. Ricardo Terga Cintrón:

- España en la Chiquimula y Jutiapa Colonial.
- España en la Verapaz del Sur y la región central de Guatemala Colonial.
- España en el Occidente de Guatemala Colonial.
- España en el Progreso y Zacapa Colonial.
- Kaqkoj Donde brota el mar pequeño.
- Tactic El Corazón del Mundo.
- Todos somos Cobaneros.
- Almas Gemelas.
- Historia de los Altos: a través de las actas del ayuntamiento de Quetzaltenango, desde 1807 a 1931 tomos I al IV, Manuel Aparicio Mérida.
- Relaciones Geográficas e Históricas del Siglo XVIII del Reino de Guatemala, Tomo I, Jorge Luján Muñoz.

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<sup>2</sup> Arzobispado de Guatemala, “Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano” (<https://m.arzobispadodeguatemala.com/arquidiocesis;search=26638644/c/0/i/30298609/archivo-historico-arquidiocesano#article> : Accessed 13 May 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Organismo Judicial de Guatemala, “Archivo General de Protocolos” ([http://ww2.oj.gob.gt/archivodeprotocolos/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=105](http://ww2.oj.gob.gt/archivodeprotocolos/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=105) Accessed 13 May 2024).

- La familia Palma, Genealogía, Heráldica e Historia, Susana Isabel Palma.
- Los Alemanes en Guatemala 1828 – 1944, Regina Wagner.
- Terra Amica Presencia Italiana en Guatemala, Comitato degli Italiani all’Estero.
- La diáspora Palestina en El Salvador 1880 – 2019, Melissa Rivas Montoya.
- La mies es abundante : España en la Ciudad de Santiago de Guatemala y la Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción Colonial, Rev. Ricardo Terga Cintrón  
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/808644-la-mies-es-abundante-espana-en-la-ciudad-de-santiago-de-guatemala-y-la-nueva-guatemala-de-la-asuncion-colonial?offset=1>
- Monterroso Origen del apellido, ascendencia y descendencia de Francisco Monterroso y Lezana: 1450-2020, Francisco Monterroso  
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/798114/?offset=&return=1#page=1&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=>
- Apuntes para la genealogía : Los Orígenes de la Familia Vicente Urbaneja, desde los albores del Siglo XIV en Las Encartaciones de Vizcaya, Burgos, Salamanca y Guatemala, Aldo Nery Bonilla  
<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/870899/?offset=&return=1#page=1&viewer=picture&o=info&n=0&q=>

## **Cemeteries:**

- Billion Graves: <https://es.billiongraves.com/cemetery/Cementerio-General/159847>
- Find a Grave: <https://es.findagrave.com/cemetery/2176778/cementerio-general>

## **FamilySearch Wiki:**

For Central America, the FamilySearch Wiki genealogical site is one of the most valuable resources for online genealogical research, as it includes historical information, types of available records, and direct access to the FamilySearch catalog for parish, civil, and other records.

## **Conclusions and Practical Advice:**

- Understand the historical context.
- Learn about the resources available online and in physical form.
- Participate in groups or communities for assistance.
- Utilize all available resources (censuses, parish records, civil registers, libraries, and repositories).