

Mexico: Jewish Family History Research Guide

Overview

Jews first arrived in Mexico in the 16th century from Spain and Portugal, accompanying early explorers to the Americas. Their arrival took place in the midst of the Spanish Inquisition, and almost all were “conversos”—Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity, but secretly practiced Judaism. However, the Inquisition also traveled to the New World, and anyone suspected of practicing Judaism was burned at the stake. Until the Inquisition was abolished in 1813, Jews in Mexico experienced incredible persecution.

Immigration from non-Spanish Europe began with a wave of German Jews in the 1840's, followed by French and British Jews in the late 1800's, and Eastern Europeans in the 1920's. A large group of Syrian, Turkish, and Greek Jews also arrived around the turn of the century. Mexico's first synagogue was erected in 1885 to accommodate the rising population.

Mexico City has always been the center of the country's Jewry, with the majority of Jews residing there. The inhabitants have varied backgrounds and a varied linguistic heritage: Yiddish, German, Hungarian, Ladino, and Arabic. Since the 1930's, the largest number have been of Eastern European origin. Today, besides Mexico City, Jews can be found in the cities of Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Tijuana. The total Jewish population in Mexico is 50,000 or less.

Sources at the Center for Jewish History

Genealogical Data

Mexican Inquisition Collection. **AJHS I-3**

Los Judios De Alepo En Mexico. Maguen David, 1989. Contains genealogies.
ASF F 1392 .J4 J815

Liebman, Seymour B. *The Inquisitors and the Jews in the New World: summaries of procesos, 1500-1810, and bibliographical guide*. University of Miami Press, 1974. Appendix “itemizes documents with special Jewish interest.”
REF F 1419 .J4 L52

General Information

Ashkenazi, Isaac Dabbah. *Esperanza Y Realidad: Raíces de la Comunidad Judía de Alepo de Mexico*.
AJHS F 1392 .J4 A73

Bocanegra, Matías de. *Jews And The Inquisition Of Mexico: the Great Auto de fe of 1649 as related by Mathias de Bocanegra*. Coronado Press, 1974.
AJHS and ASF BX 1740 .M6 B613

Lerner, Ira T. *Mexican Jewry in the Land of the Aztecs*. Costa-Amic, 1973. Quaint and dated but has many photos.
REF F 1392 .J4 L4

Lewin, Boleslao. *La Inquisición en Mexico: impresionantes relatos del siglo XVI*. Jose M. Cajica, Jr., 1968.

AJHS BX 1740 .M6 L2

Lewin, Boleslao. *La Inquisición en Mexico: impresionantes relatos del siglo XVII*. Jose M. Cajica, Jr., 1968.

AJHS BX 1740 .M6 L25; ASF BX 1740 .M6 L48 1968

Liebman, Seymour B. *A Guide to Jewish references in the Mexican Colonial era*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964.

AJHS F 1392 .J4 L5

Liebman, Seymour B. *The Jews in New Spain: faith, flame, and the Inquisition*. University of Miami Press, 1970. Appendices with digests and translations of official accounts of autos-da-fé and extracts of Inquisition canons.

REF F 1392 .J4 L2

Nes El, Moshe. *Guia Biografica del Judaismo Latinoamericano*. Revisa Oriente y Occidente, 1996. Spanish biographical dictionary of notable personalities, with a short history of the Jews of Mexico.

REF F 1419 .J4 N4

Postal, Bernard. *The American Airlines Tourist's Guide to Jewish History in Mexico*. 1979.

AJHS F 1392 .J4 P5

Sable, Martin H. *Latin American Jewry: A Research Guide*. Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1978. Contains extensive listings of primary sources and directories of organizations.

REF F 1419 .J4 S3

Yidishe shul in Meksike Ikh bin do = Presente: 70 Aniversario, 1924-1994, Colegio Israelita de Mexico. 1994.

YIVO /98685

Sources in Mexico

By Alexandro Teodoro Rubinstein Lach

ARGENA www.agn.gob.mx (Spanish only)

- Archivo General de la Nación, the largest federal archive in México
- Location: Palacio de Lecumberri (a former prison)
- Open: Monday – Friday, 8.15 am – 5.00 pm (some sections close earlier)

Documents of Colonial Institutions

- Inheritances (Bienes de Difuntos)
- Census
- Edicts of the Inquisition
- Inquisition
- Marriages
- Real Fisco de la Inquisición

Documents of the Federal Government

- Maritime Travel, Passports and Security Letters
- Migration Department
- Population and Personal Identification National Registry
- Foreign Relations Ministry (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores)

Collections and Documents

- History: A collection of 597 volumes offering a rich source for research
- Comprises information on the 16th – 19th Centuries

Photographic Archives and Collections

Microfiche and Photocopied Archives

- Jacobo Glantz
- Academia Mexicana de Genealogía y Heráldica

CDICA

cdica@hotmail.com

- Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Comunidad Ashkenazí, the sole Jewish research center in Mexico
- Location: Nidjei Israel Community Center (Acapulco 70 2nd floor, Mexico City)
- Open from M – F, 10.00 am – 2.00 pm and M – Th, 4.00 pm – 6.00 pm

Library

- Jewish History
- Collections
- Published Material in Mexico
- Holocaust
- Israel
- Jewish Art
- Diasporas

Periodical Library

- All kinds of material with a special focus on Jewish matters
- Newspapers, magazines, yearbooks and newsletters written in Spanish, Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Russian and Polish

Historical Archive

- Kehilá Ashkenazí
- Cámara Israelita de Industria y Comercio
- Consejo Mexicano de Mujeres Israelitas
- Bnei Brith
- Comité Central Israelita de México
- Jewish Agency: Aliya

Joined-in Archives

- Benjamin Kovalsky
- Rabbi Israel Fishleder
- Tuvia Maizel
- Dunia Wasserstrom
- Nahum Wengrowsky
- Jacobo Glantz
- Busia Rostov

Oral History Archive

- Interviews with First Immigrants
- Witnesses of World War II
- Personal Stories of Refugees
- Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors

Databases

- Jewish immigration to Mexico
- Polish refugees in Santa Rosa, Guanajuato
- Established Jewish businesses
- 1949 Census of the Mexican Jewish Community
- Minutes of the Comité Central Israelita de México

New Project

- Set of 2 CD ROM's to include all Jewish immigrant databases
- More than 10,000 entries, including personal histories
- Demographic information and graphics

See also "Genealogía Judía Mexicana: Reto Y Posibilidad," Toldot No. 20, July 2003, pp. 8-10 (Asociación de Genealogía Judía de Argentina) at the Center for Jewish History Genealogy Institute

Web Sites

For learning more about Mexico's history and modern-day culture:

Jewish Virtual Library: Virtual Jewish History Tour

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Mexico.html>

An alphabetical listing of Conversos tried in the Mexican Inquisition

<http://longoriaf.tripod.com/Jews2.htm>