



The Azores and Madeira Research Guide

ANCESTOR'S BIRTH LOCATION UNKNOWN

FamilySearch Indexed Records: Try searching first in indexed records. Try a variety of searches with your ancestor's name, or with parent's names, or just by parent's surnames AND using the option to limit the locality by the country of "Portugal" and the name of the island.

Contact family members: If you do not have even a minimal amount of information AND have no idea of where and when to look, you need to contact family members who might have that information. This could be older aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.

ANCESTOR'S BIRTH LOCATION AND NAMES OF PARENTS, SPOUSE, OR CHILDREN ARE KNOWN

FamilySearch Indexed Records: Try searching first in indexed records. Try a variety of searches with your ancestor's name, or with parent's names, or just by parent's surnames AND using the option to limit the locality by the country of "Portugal" and the name of the island.

Online Parish Records: The Azorean government has placed many images of parish records online. To learn more about them see the wiki page for **Azores** and read the section **Parish Records**, which will include a link to the **Centro de Conhecimento dos Açores**: <http://www.culturacores.azores.gov.pt/ig/registos/Default.aspx>. Another important site is found in the section **Population Studies** of the same article. This is a collection of family genealogy information compiled for a few of the islands.

For Madeira you will want to visit the site of the Arquivo Regional da Madeira: <https://abm.madeira.gov.pt/en/home/> and click **Resources** then **Archives**. From this page, click **Databases** to search all of the archives holdings, or search in the baptism or marriage indexes. Marriage records for all parishes have been indexed up through 1911. Some parish baptisms have also been indexed for the years 1860 to 1911 but this is not yet complete.

If you find either of the district archives difficult to navigate, try the website tombo.pt/en. On the toolbar at the left side of the page, click on the **region** of Azores or Madeira. From the region page, click on the **island** where your ancestor lived on the toolbar, then select the **municipality** and **civil parish** where they lived. If you only know the town or parish name, search for the name in the **search bar** towards the top of the toolbar. Once you've navigated to the civil parish where your ancestor lived, you will see a list of available records in the middle of the screen. Click to link to the specific collection you want to browse, and you will be taken directly to the images on the district archive's website.

To search the indexes for Madeira, after selection the region of Madeira, click either **baptismos**

or **casamentos** to be brought to the search page.

FamilySearch Catalog: Not all records for Portugal are online, be sure to check the catalog before giving up on finding records. However, if the images are also available on the district archives (see above), view the online records first, as the image quality is generally much better on the district archives' website than the microfilm at the library.

RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Who to Search For? If you don't know the names of the parents, but you know the name of the spouse and/or the names of some of his children, begin with a marriage search (if they married in Portugal and you know the place). Or begin with a search for the birth/baptism record for one of their children (if you have an approximate birthdate and place).

FamilySearch Wiki: Translation, handwriting help, and descriptions of specific record collections can be found on the FamilySearch Wiki. Under Search on the home page selection Research Wiki. Type **Azores** or **Madeira** and hit **Enter**. Click the link **Azores, Portugal Genealogy** or **Madeira, Portugal Genealogy**. The information on this page will lead you to helpful topics such as **Languages** (under Portugal Background), which includes a list of genealogical terms in Portuguese and a letter-writing guide if you need to request documents from the Azores or Madeira.

FamilySearch Community: You can get immediate research and handwriting help from a community of researchers through the FamilySearch Communities. Go to <http://community.familysearch.org/> and click **Groups**. Search for **Pesquisa Genealógica** to find the group for Portuguese genealogical research. Although many of the post on this group are in Portuguese, the members will respond to posts in English. On this page, you can post research questions and upload documents to get translation help.

SURNAME PECULIARITIES

In the Portuguese culture the females of a family often took on the mother's surname for their surname while the males took on the surname of the father. There are exceptions to this if one family name was prominent in society or had greater wealth in which case the whole family might choose to use that surname regardless of whether it came from the mother or father. Other times females would use saint's names instead of surnames. Analyze family relationships to determine if a woman used a different surname in different records throughout her life.

FINDING A LOCALITY

For help locating a place in the Azores, try the following sources:

- Wikipedia (The Spanish version works the best)
- Search for the town in the toolbar on the left side of **Tombo.pt/en**
- Try a keyword search in the FamilySearch Catalog for Azores or Madeira Gazetteers