Reading Spanish Handwriting

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The ability to read Spanish handwritten records opens the door to a world of records for those with Hispanic ancestry. It also provides a wonderful opportunity to serve others by helping to index records in Spanish. In this class you will learn about the origins of the Spanish language; the composition of the Spanish alphabet; how to identify letters, spelling variations, names, and commonly used abbreviations. These skills will help enable you to more readily recognize record types and extract key information.

ORIGINS OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

After Mandarin and English, Spanish is the third most commonly spoken language in the world.
- Originated in the Iberian Peninsula
- Influenced by Latin
- Arabic influence beginning in the 8th century
- Castilian Spanish or Castellano began to dominate in the 1200s.

SPANISH ALPHABET

29 letters
- 26 letters of the English alphabet
- Extra letters – Ch, Ll, Ñ

Interchangeable letters
- i - y
- b – v - u
- j – g - x
- c – z – s – ss – ç – x

Examples of words with interchangeable letters
- Ysabel – Isabel – Isavel
- habia – havia
- mujer – muger – muxer
- licencia – lizencia

SPELLING VARIATIONS

Because of interchangeable letters you may find words misspelled. Some examples include:
- Enero – henero
- Cayetano – Calletano

- Veinte – beinte

NAMES

Commonly used first names

- José
- Maria
- Juan

Double surname system

- First last name – Paternal surname
- Second last name – Maternal surname
- Women never change their surnames
- A road map for your Hispanic research

Example Juan Perez Ramos

- Perez = paternal surname
- Ramos = maternal surname (maiden name)

Commonly used name abbreviations

- Antonio - Ant^o
- Francisco - F^{co} or Fran^{co}
- Juana - J^a
- Magdalena - Mag^{da}
- Maria - M^a

For more information on name abbreviations, please click on the following link if you are viewing this document electronically Name abbreviations or visit the Spanish Genealogical Word List article in the FamilySearch Wiki:
<https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List>

RECORD TYPES

FORMATS
Paragraph format

- Date, place, and name of the official or priest
- Information about the informant (civil registration)
- Information about the type of event
- Names of other people you might find in records:
    - Parents (births/baptisms, marriages, deaths/burials)
    - Spouse (marriages, deaths/burials)
    - Grandparents (births/baptisms)
    - Witnesses
    - Godparents (baptisms)
    - Surviving heirs (deaths/burials)

Pre-printed Forms

- Not as common
- More likely in 20th century records

KEY WORDS

archive	archivo
baptism	bautismo, bauticé
birth	nacimiento, nació
burial	entierro, sepultura, sepultado(a)
Catholic church	Iglesia Catolica
census	censo, padrón
child	niño(a), hijo(a), párvulo(a)
christening	See baptism
church records	registros parroquiales
civil registry	Registro Civil
confirmation	confirmación
day	día
death	muerte, defunción, fallecimiento, muerto(a), difunto(a), fallecido(a)
father	padre
grandparent	abuelo(a)
husband	marido, esposo, cónyuge
index	indice
marriage	matrimonio, casamiento, casé, velé, casado(a)
military	militar, ejército
month	mes
morning	mañana
mother	madre
name, given	nombre de pila
name, surname	apellido
parents	padres
parish	parroquia
wife	esposa, mujer, cónyuge
year	año

For more keywords, please visit the Spanish Genealogical Word List article in the FamilySearch Wiki: https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List

NEED MORE HELP?

- Script tutorials found at the website Script.byu.edu https://script.byu.edu/Pages/home.aspx
- For more information on the Spanish alphabet, name abbreviations, and key words visit the Spanish Genealogical Word List article in the FamilySearch Wiki: https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List
- Online classes in the Help Center of FamilySearch, https://familysearch.org/ask/landing
- Paleography Manual (in Spanish). This is a downloadable reference manual on reading Spanish handwriting, written in Spanish. It includes exercises you can do to improve

your ability to read documents.
<http://www.chf.org.mx/menu/04/docs/guias/guia_de_paleografia.pdf>

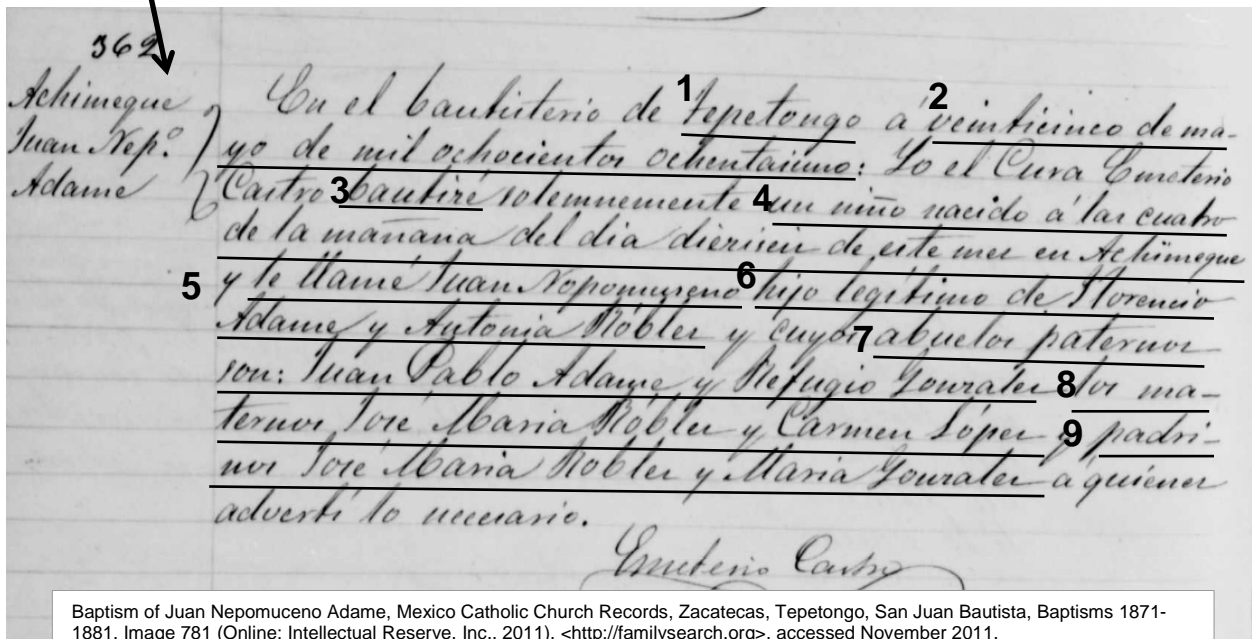**Margin note:**
Achimeque (place of birth)
Juan Nep° (Nepomuceno) Adame (name of child)

1. Tepetongo (locality)
2. á veinticinco de mayo de mil ochocientos ochentaiuno
(on the twenty-fifth of May of one thousand eight hundred eighty-one)
3. bauticé (I baptized)
4. un niño nacido á las cuatro de la mañana del dia dieziseis de este mes en Achimeque (a male child born at four in the morning of the 16th in Achimeque)

Baptism of Juan Nepomuceno Adame, Mexico Catholic Church Records, Zacatecas, Tepetongo, San Juan Bautista, Baptisms 1871-1881, Image 781 (Online: Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2011), <http://familysearch.org>, accessed November 2011.

5. le llamé Juan Nepomuceno (I named him Juan Nepumuceno)
6. hijo legítimo de Florencio Adame y Antonia Robles (legitimate son of Florencio Adame and Antonia Robles
7. abuelos paternos son: Juan Pablo Adame y Refugio Gonzales (the paternal grandparents are: Juan Pablo Adame and Refugio Gonzales)
8. los maternos Jose Maria Robles y Carmen López (the maternals [grandparents is implied] Jose Maria Robles and Carmen López).
9. padrinos José Maria Robles y Maria Gonzales (godparents José Maria Robles and Maria Gonzales).