

Sephardic Family History Research Guide

Sephardim

Spanish Jews, who had lived on the Iberian Peninsula since 6 B.C.E, began to call themselves Sephardim during the early Middle Ages. After the expulsions from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), Jews fled to numerous places within Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the New World. The word *Sephardim* came to refer to the Jews of these countries whose origins still remained in Spain or Portugal and who spoke Ladino and other Spanish regional dialects.

Sephardic Genealogy

Since the Sephardic world is so diverse and widespread, it is difficult to make generalizations about Sephardic genealogy. The sources, methods, and results of genealogical research on a family in Amsterdam, for example, differ greatly from research on a family in Aleppo or Salonika. However, there are several common characteristics:

- Sephardic family names are much older than most Ashkenazi names. With Hebraic, Aramaic, Spanish or Arabic roots, Sephardic surnames are often traceable to the 11th century and even earlier.
- In Sephardic naming customs, children can be named for both the living and the dead. Often, the firstborn son is named after the paternal grandfather, and the firstborn daughter is named after the paternal grandmother, so that given names may appear in every other generation.

Resources at the Center for Jewish History

General References

Etsi (www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/1321): journal of Sephardic genealogy (French/English) **Genealogy Institute**

Faiguenboim, Guilherme, Paulo Valadares, and Anna Campagnano. *Dicionário Sefaradi de Sobrenomes*. (Sao Paulo, Fraiha, 2003) **Genealogy Institute CS 3010 .F35 2003**

Gandhi, Maneka. *The Complete Book of Muslim and Parsi Names*. New Delhi: Indus, 1994. **REF CS 2970 .G36 1994**

Malka, Jeffrey S. *Sephardic Genealogy: Discovering Your Sephardic Ancestors and their World*. (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2002) **Genealogy Institute CS 21 .M35**

Resources by Country

Argentina – see our separate Research Guide

Barbados

Barbados Jewish Community Collection. Records from Congregation Nidhe Israel and an index of names and ages from a 1715 census of Barbados. **AJHS I-139**

Brazil

Geracoes/Brasil, the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Brazil (1995-1998). **Genealogy Institute**

New Christians and Jews in Pernambuco, with historical narratives and biographical sketches. **AJHS F 2601 .M4315**

Samuel Oppenheim Collection. Samuel Oppenheim's research notes about Colonial American and Brazilian Jewry, from court records, synagogue records, and the records of the Dutch West India Company. The collection is housed in 42 boxes; the finding aid contains sections on individuals (alphabetical by surname), groups, and localities. **AJHS P-255**

Mello, Jose Antonio *Gente da nação: Cristãos-Novos e judeus Pernambuco, 1542-1645* (Editora Massangana, 1990). **AJHS F 2601 .M4315 1985**

Wiznitzer, Arnold *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World* (Kahal Kodesh sur Israel of Recife and Magen Abraham of Mauricia, Brazil) (AJHS, 1954). **AJHS F 2659 .J5 W5**

Wolff, Egon. *Dictionario Biographico*. (Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, 1986-1992), 7 volumes.

- Vol. 1 *Judizantes e Judeus no Brazil*, 1500-1808. Biographies of Jews and converts
- Vol. 2 *Judeus no Brazil*, 19th century. Biographies
- Vol. 3 *Testamentos e Inventarios*, 1684-1934. Wills and Inventories of estates
- Vol. 4 *Processos de Naturalizacoes de Israelitas*. 19th century naturalization records
- Vol. 5 *Judaismo e Judues na Bibliografia em Lingua Portuguesa*. Bibliography of Portugese publications on Judaism
- Vol. 6 *Geneologias Judaicas*. Genealogies of Brazilian Jewish families
- Vol. 7 *Processos de Inquisicao de Lisboa*. Records of the Inquisition of Lisbon, including the date of the auto-de-fe, name of person, crime, and sentence. **AJHS F 2659 .J5 W68**

Wolff, Egon and Frieda *O Cristao-Novo na obra De Carlos* (Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, 1990). A description of New Christians, converted from Judaism, in the 16th and 17th Century, including biographical sketches of the first families of Rio De Janiero. **AJHS F 2646.9 .J4 W65**

China

Studies of the Chinese Jews: Selections from Journals East and West. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1971. **ASF DS 135 .C5 K83 1971**

White, William Charles. *Chinese Jews: a compilation of matters relating to the Jews of Kai-feng Fu*. (Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966) **YIVO /23115**

Curacao

Curacao Jewish Community Collection. In addition to congregational records, this collection includes births, 1723-1891; deaths 1883-1912; and lists of community members. **AJHS I-112**

Emmanuel, Isaac Samuel. *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curacao*. (Bloch, 1957) **AJHS F 2049 .E55**

Emmanuel, Isaac Samuel. *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles (2 volumes)*. (American Jewish Archives, 1970) **REF F 2049 .E44 1970**

England

Barnett, Lionel, ed. *Bevis Marks Records: Records of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation of London* (London, 1949). Part II includes abstracts of ketubot (marriage contracts) from earliest times until 1837, with index. Part III includes abstracts of ketubot and civil marriage registers for 1837-1901. **AJHS BM 295 .C7 A3**

Germany

Hamburg Jewish Community Collection: Includes copies of Sephardic gravestone inscriptions in Altona, Gluckstadt and Emden; a 1696 index of marriage contracts of the Sephardim in Hamburg; and a German translation of the minute book of the Sephardic Beth Israel congregation. **LB Archives MF77a, microfilm reels 1-2.**

Jacob Jacobson Collection: 18th and 19th century records from the Jewish community of Altona, including the minute book of the burial society of Sephardic Congregation Neve Shalom. **LB Archives MF 447, microfilm reels 1-37.**

Greece

Salonika Jewish Community Collection: Includes population registration books with records of vital statistics, 1920-1939 and lists of Salonika Jews, ca 1939. **YIVO Archives RG 207**

India

Ezra, Esmond David. *Turning Back the Pages: Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*. (Brookside Press, 1986) **ASF DS135 .I62 C344 1986**

Italy

Roth, Cecil. *The History of the Jews of Italy*. (JPSFA, 1946) **ASF DS 135 .I8 R6 1946**

Stille, Alexander. *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism*. (Summit, 1991) **ASF DS 135 .I9 A17 1991**

Jamaica:

The Jews of Jamaica: Tombstone Inscriptions 1663-1880, by Richard Barnett and Philip Wright (Ben Zvi Institute, 1997). **YIVO /90579**.

Mexico – see our separate Research Guide

Netherlands

Belinfante, Judith C., et al. *The Esnoga: A Monument to Portuguese-Jewish Culture*. (D'ARTS, 1991). **ASF BM 327 .A62 A587 1991**

Bodin, Miriam. *Hebrews of the Portugues Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*. (Indiana University Press, 1997). **YIVO /90959**

Verdooner, D., and H.J.W. Snel *Handleiding bij de index op de Ketuboth van de Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente te Amsterdam van 1650-1911*. **REF DS 135 .N5 A7 1990**

North Africa

Abensur, Philip *Moroccan Jewish Surnames*, a surname index to Abraham Laredo's *Les Noms des Juifs du Maroc* (Institute Arias Montano, 1978). (Avotaynu) **YIVO Library microfiche**

Attal, Robert. *Registres Matrimoniaux de la Communauté Juive Portugaise de Tunis aux XVIIIe et XIXe Siecles* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1989). (French) **REF DS 135 .T72 T863 1989**

Toledano, Joseph *Une histoire des familles, les noms de familles juifs d'Afrique de Nord* (Ramtol, 1998). **YIVO /92990**

Spain and Portugal

Abecassis, Jose Maria. *Genealogia Hebraica. Portugal e Gibraltar*. (Lisbon, 1990). 4 volumes of documented family trees, from the 17th to the 20th centuries. (Portuguese) **REF DS 135 .P7 A37 1990**

Baron, Salo. *Historia e Historiografia do Povo Judeu*. (Editora Perspectiva, 1975) **ASF DS 102.5 .B32 1975**

Costa, Isaac da *Noble Families Among the Sephardic Jews* (London, 1936). **AJHS DS 135 .S7 C6**

Gerber, Jane. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. (Free Press, 1992). **ASF DS 135 .S7 G47 1992**

Netanyahu, Ben Zion. *The Origins of the Inquisition*. New York: Random House, 1995. **ASF BX 1735 .N48 1995**

Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Marranos*. (Sepher-Hermon Press, 1992) **ASF BM 190 .R62 1992**

Turkey

Archives of Morris Tarragano. Compiled by Dr. Esther Fleischman and Randall C. Belinfante. **ASF DS 135 .T79 A5 T38 2001**

Web Sites and Online Databases

www.americansephardifederation.org/sub/library/genealogy.asp

American Sephardi Federation Genealogy Databases

<http://dutchjewry.huji.ac.il>

Center for Research on Dutch Jewry, Hebrew University

www.sefarad.org

European Sefardic Institute

<http://www.sephardicgen.com/>

Jeffrey Malka's site of Sephardic genealogy tips

www.nljewgen.org/eng/index.html

Netherlands Society for Jewish Genealogy: Sephardic burials at Jodengang cemetery in Middelburg 1656-1727

www.jewishgen.org/SefardSIG

Special Interest Group on Sephardic Jewry

www.sephardim.com/search.shtml

Sephardic names search engine

Other Records

Archivo Historico Nacional

Serrano 115, 28006 Madrid, Spain

phone (917) 688-500, fax (915) 631-199

www.cultura.mecd.es/archivos/index.html

Inquisition records

Ben Zvi Institute

P.O. Box 7660

Jerusalem 91076, Israel

<http://ybz.org.il/>

Oriens Judaicus Series—Sources for the History of Jews in Muslim Lands

Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Sprinzak Building, Givat Ram

P.O.Box 1149, Jerusalem 91010, Israel

Tel./Fax.: (972)-2-5635716

<http://sites.huji.ac.il/archives>

Partial community archives from Algeria, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, and other countries.

Yeshiva University Library

Special Collections

500 West 185th Street

Phone (212) 960-5451

www.yu.edu/libraries/page.asp?id=34

Jamie Lehmann Memorial Collection contains records of the Cairo Jewish community from 1886 to 1961. The Sephardic Reference Room houses an extensive collection of books, periodicals, and audio materials in Judeo-Arabic, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Hebrew and English.