

FOCUS ON

Finding Your Mexican Roots

¡Bienvenidos! Welcome to our class on Mexican genealogy. Finding ancestors is challenging enough, but adding a foreign language makes it seem even more daunting. Still, armed with a few useful tips, guidelines and our genealogy staff's boundless encouragement, researching your Mexican roots can be enjoyable and fruitful. *¡Vámanos!*

HOW DO I BEGIN?

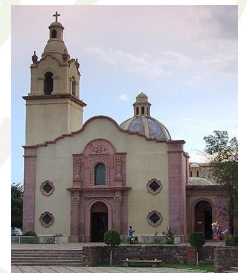
Start with the ancestor about whom you know the most. You need a **NAME**—but realize that Hispanic names are often plural and might have changed after your ancestor came to the United States. It's important to find a **BIRTH DATE** (or an estimate) and the **PLACE** in Mexico from which your ancestor came. The key to starting your Mexican research is to find out what **state (estado)** your ancestor called home, then the **town (pueblo)** and **parish (parroquia)** for church records or **municipality (municipio)** and **city (ciudad)** for civil records. Our goal today is to get you moving in the right direction.

CLUES TO FINDING NAMES, DATES AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

Church records (b/m/d) • Civil Records (b/m/d, wills, deeds, probates, etc.) • U.S. Censuses • 1930 Mexican Census
Courthouse Records • Naturalization Records • Border Crossing Records • Military Records • Obituaries • Newspaper Articles
Letters • Funeral Cards • Postcards • Photographs • Older relatives • Family Bible

CHURCH RECORDS vs CIVIL RECORDS

CHURCH: Established in Mexico in 1527, the Catholic Church was Mexico's primary record keeper until civil registration began. Dioceses usually used the same writing standard, so that information found in church records is mostly consistent. The vast majority of Mexicans were Catholic and are registered in the parish records of their local parish or diocese. These records include *baptisms, confirmations, marriage information documents, marriages, deaths and burials*. Often, two or sometimes even three generations are found in the registers. Records were kept at the parish, and a copy was sent to the diocesan archive.



CIVIL: Civil records in Mexico began in 1859, though enforcement throughout the country was lax until 1867. These include *birth, marriage and death records*. After 1859, both church and civil records should be searched, because information in one might not appear in the other. For example, the church record may only list the godparents, but the civil record might list the grandparents.

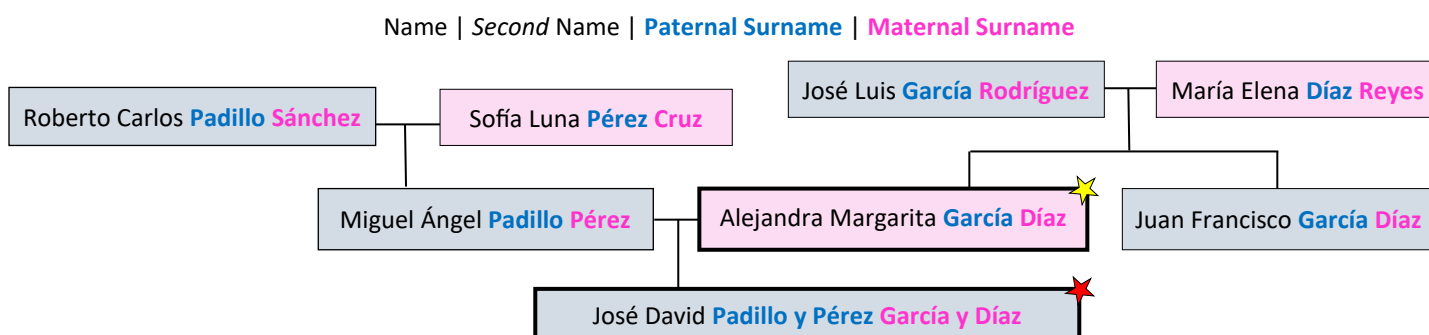
Again, it all begins with a name. Next, we'll explore those often-confusing Hispanic naming traditions.

Guidelines for deciphering Spanish names

Confusion surrounding Hispanic names leaves many researchers feeling anxious about starting Mexican genealogy research. These guidelines, while not hard and fast rules, are designed to help beginners decipher the naming traditions that govern the names of Mexican ancestors:

- Hispanic naming traditions are **patronymic**, meaning surnames are determined by the male line
 - ◆ The “ez” at the end of many Spanish surnames originated as a way to denote “the son of”, e.g. Fernández: son of Fernando
- In the Spanish language, **apellido** most closely translates to surname. Note that it does not mean LAST name
- Generally, Hispanic names:
 - ◆ Include **two** surnames, one from the father and one from the mother
 - ◆ In the case of illegitimate children, both of the mother’s surnames were often used
 - ◆ Orphans were sometimes given surnames to reflect their home, such as Iglesias (church)
 - ◆ First names may include Saints’ names
 - ◆ First names may be used together or separately, e.g. María Carmen may go as María Carmen or just Carmen

Lineage and Spanish Surnames



★ Generally, married women keep their family (maiden) names. However, there are exceptions, especially in more recent generations. As a married woman, Alejandra Margarita (shown above) could be known as:

1. Alejandra Margarita García Díaz (her maiden name)
2. Alejandra Margarita García Padillo (her paternal surname and her husband’s paternal surname)
3. Alejandra Margarita García de Padillo (“de” is sometimes added to identify the surname gained by marriage)
4. Alejandra Margarita García-Díaz Padillo (compound names do not require any legal documentation in Mexico)

Advantages of Spanish Surnames

- Easier to keep track of maternal lines
- ★ • A child’s name provides surnames of both paternal and maternal grandfathers
- Both the surnames of each parent can be kept together by using a “y” (translates to “and”) between the names

Complications of Spanish First Names and Surnames

- Indexers may not be familiar with naming conventions and index names under the maternal surname only
- Special characters may cause computer or publication indexing issues with surnames; Pérez may follow Pyle
- When immigrating to the U.S., some families switched the order of surnames to keep the emphasis on the paternal line
 - ◆ **Pablo** Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz **Picasso**
 - ◆ Magdalena Carmen **Frida Kahlo Calderón**
 - ◆ **Diego** María de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la **Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez**

WHERE CAN I FIND THE RECORDS?

There are two major online sources of church and civil records for Mexico

FamilySearch

Ancestry

FAMILYSEARCH

FamilySearch is FREE! You must create an account with a username and password at *familysearch.org*.

FamilySearch has many indexed records, but most records are only browseable at this time.

What might be most valuable to researchers, however, is the *Research Wiki* for Mexico. Let's check it out, as shown below!

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch website interface. On the left, a navigation menu is open, highlighting 'Research Wiki'. A red arrow points from this menu item to the 'Research Wiki' page on the right. The 'Research Wiki' page is titled 'Mexico Genealogy' and features a world map with a red arrow pointing to Mexico. A search bar on the page contains the text 'Mexico Genealogy'. A green arrow points from the search bar to the text 'Type "Mexico Genealogy" into the search well as shown above...'. The main content area of the page includes a search bar, a 'List of all Localities' button, and a 'Start New Search' button. Below the search bar, there are sections for 'All Collections Search' and 'Recommended Tasks'.

Type "Mexico Genealogy" into the search well as shown above...

The screenshot shows the 'Mexico Genealogy' page on the FamilySearch Research Wiki. The page is titled 'Mexico Genealogy' and includes a 'Country Information' section, a 'Getting Started' section, and a 'Mexico Research Tools' section. A large red starburst with the text 'WOW!!!' is overlaid on the page. On the right side, there is a 'Mexico Wiki Topics' sidebar with a list of record types and background information. The 'Record Types' section includes: Cemeteries, Census, Church Directories, Church Records, Civil Registration, Colonial Records, Directories, Emigration & Immigration, Compiled Genealogies, Land & Property, Military Records, Newspapers, Nobility, Notarial Records, Online Records, Periodicals, Probate, Public Records, Religious Records, and Vital Records. The 'Mexico Background' section includes: Biography, Church History, Gazetteers, Historical Geography, History, Personal Names, Social Life & Customs, Spanish Word List, and Yucatan Languages. The 'Local Research Resources' section includes: Archives & Libraries, Societies, and Family History Centers. The 'Moderator' section lists 'The FamilySearch moderator for Mexico is Dvsmith2'. A red box highlights 'Spanish Word List' in the 'Mexico Background' section.



Clicking on SONORA on the map will open the WIKI page shown below. It's a "how-to" guide to genealogy research in this northern Mexican state.

Sonora, Mexico Genealogy

Mexico ▾ State of Sonora
Guide to State of Sonora ancestry, family history and genealogy: birth records, marriage records, death records, census records, parish registers, and military records.

Mexico Online Genealogy Records Ask the Community

Contents [hide]

- History
- How to Find the Town of Origin in Mexico
- Civil Registration
 - Find the Municipality for Your Town
 - Online Digital Records for Civil Registration
 - Ancestry.com/mx
 - Monthly Copies of Civil Registration Records in the FamilySearch Catalog
 - Writing for Civil Registration Certificates
- Church Records
 - Online Digital Records for Church Records
 - Monthly Copies of Church Records in the FamilySearch Catalog
 - Writing to a Catholic Priest for Church Records
- Reading the Records
 - Tips for finding your ancestor in the records
 - Search Strategy

Let's use FamilySearch to find an indexed record, using Sonora as our state. Return to the FamilySearch homepage as seen below, and under Search click on Records. This takes you to the search window shown below. Scroll to Search by Place. Type "sonora" in the Browse Places search well, and hit enter on the keyboard.

Let's use Arturo Figueroa as an example. He was born between 1920 and 1930. Type those facts into the search wells (shown to the right) and click Search. We got 79 results, as shown below. But what if the records are not yet indexed??? Then, we need to browse the images.

Sonora
Welcome to our Sonora research page. We've brought together tools to help you with your research in Sonora.

Learning Courses
We have 13 learning courses to help you do your family history research in Sonora

- New Free Historical Records on FamilySearch: Week of 20 December 2021
- New Free Historical Records on FamilySearch: Week of 2 May 2022
- Discover Your Mexican Heritage

Indexed Historical Records
Search collections of records for documents about your ancestors. You can filter which collections you would like to search within.

Enter your ancestor's information and select "Search" below

Deceased Ancestor's Information
Name | Alternate Name

First Names: arturo Last Names: figueroa

Search with a life event:
Birth | Marriage | Residence | Death | Any

Birthplace: Birth Year (Range): 1920 - 1930

Search with a relationship:
Spouse | Father | Mother | Other Person

Restrict records by:
Location | Type | Batch Number | Film Number

Country or Location: Mexico State or Province: Sonora

Match all terms exactly

Search **Reset**

Filter by Collection: Showing Top 5 - Show All 12

Title	Records	Last Updated
<input type="checkbox"/> BillionGraves Index	45,272	Jun 27, 2019
<input type="checkbox"/> Find A Grave Index	7,955	Jun 15, 2022
<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico Baptisms, 1560-1950	273,256	Jun 20, 2022
<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico Deaths, 1680-1940	1,764	May 19, 2021
<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico Marriages, 1570-1950	28,936	Jun 19, 2022

Filtered Results (79)

Collection Sex Race Birth Marriage Death Other Residence

Name	Events	Relationships
Arturo Figueroa Principal Mexico, Sonora, Civil Registration, 1861-1995	Birth Registration 30 March 1919 Nacozari de Garcia, Sonora, Mexico Birth about 16 March 1919 Nacozari de Garcia, Sonora, Mexico	Parents José G. Figueroa, Refugio Chavez de Figueroa
Arturo Figueroa Principal Mexico, Sonora, Civil Registration, 1861-1995	Birth Registration 29 December 1927 Empalme, Sonora, Mexico Birth 25 March 1902 Empalme, Sonora, Mexico	Parents Eusebio Figueroa, Joaquina Castillo de Figueroa
Arturo Paredes Figueroa Principal Mexico, Sonora, Civil Registration, 1861-1995	Birth Registration 5 January 1922 Rayón, Sonora, Mexico Birth 1922 Rayón, Sonora, Mexico	Parents José Paredes, Rosa Figueroa
Arturo e Figueroa Principal Mexico National Census, 1930	Census 1930 Agua Prieta, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico Birth 1923 Sonora, Mexico	
Manuel Arturo Figueroa Principal Mexico National Census, 1930	Census 1930 Ranchito, Imuris, Sonora, Mexico Birth 1928 Sonora, Mexico	
Arturo Alvarez Figueroa Principal Mexico, Sonora, Civil Registration, 1861-1995	Death Registration 10 July 1947 Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico Birth 1921 Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico	

Let's use *FamilySearch* to find an **unindexed record by browsing** Sonora records. Return to the *FamilySearch* homepage as seen below. Under Search, *click* on Catalog. Type "Mexico, Sonora" into the search well, then choose "online" and *click* **Search**. *Click* "church records (2)" and then *click* "Mexico, Sonora, Catholic Church Records = México, Sonora, registros parroquiales."

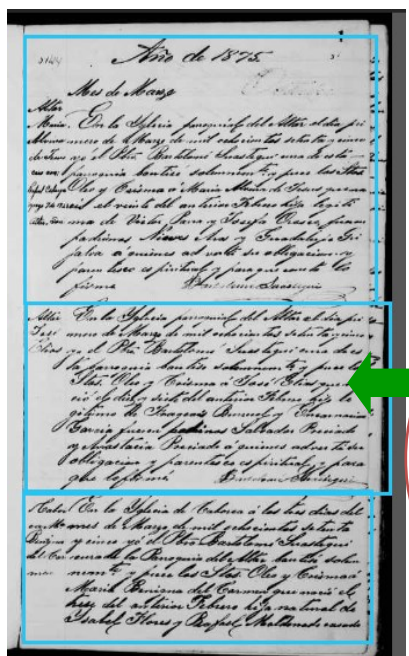
Scroll down and *click* "here," as shown below. *Click* "Browse all 383,518 images." Finally, *click* the town, the Parish, and Record Type. **Start browsing!**

Notes
Mexico, Sonora, Catholic Church Records are available online, click here.

Mexico, Sonora, Catholic Church Records, 1657-1994

Catholic Church records created by parishes in the state of Sonora, Mexico. These records include: baptisms, confirmations, parish censuses, marriages, pre-marriage investigations, deaths, and indexes.

HOW TO USE THIS COLLECTION **BROWSE ALL 383,518 IMAGES**



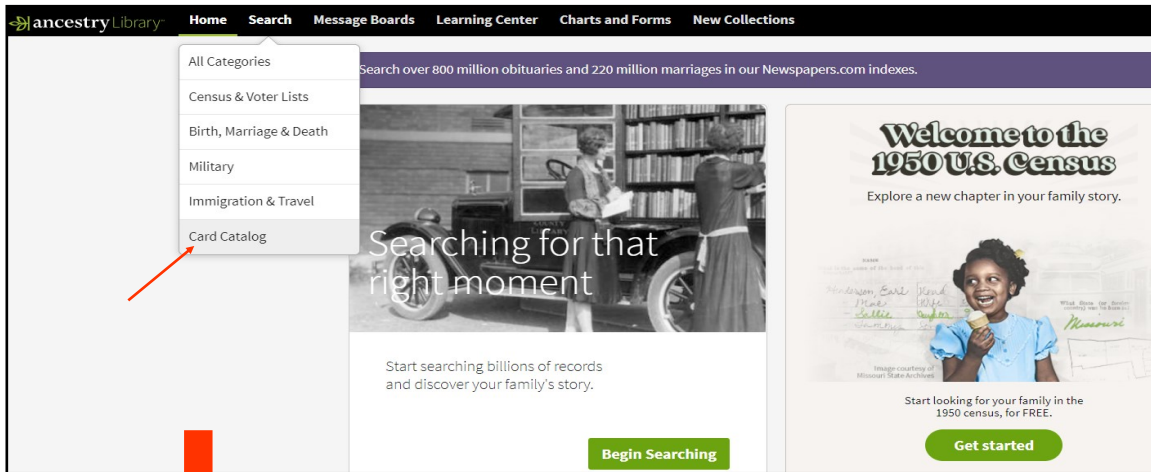
The image above shows the tools and sizing buttons available. You can browse one page at a time using the back and forth arrows, or you can browse multiple pages.

ANCESTRY

Ancestry Library Edition is FREE at any Carlsbad Library! Ancestry.com is available as a paid subscription online service.

Ancestry has many indexed Mexican records, but most records are unindexed and are only browseable at this time.

Now let's use Ancestry to find records for **Arturo Figueroa, born 1920-1930 in Sonora**. On the homepage, *click* SEARCH to expose the drop-down menu. *Click* Card Catalog. Scroll down and use Filter By Location (on the left of the page) to *click* on Mexico.



Card Catalog
Searchable listing of all record collections

Results 1-25 of 10,918

Title	Category	Records	Activity
Connecticut, U.S., Federal Naturalization Records, 1790-1996	Immigration & Emigration	1,910,763	UPDATED
U.S., Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s-current	Birth, Marriage & Death	283,863,897	UPDATED
Australia, Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s-current	Birth, Marriage & Death	678,242	UPDATED
Canada, Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s-current	Birth, Marriage & Death	6,356,174	UPDATED
Kansas, U.S., Federal Naturalization Records, 1865-1894	Immigration & Emigration	58,458	UPDATED
Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1937	Birth, Marriage & Death	792,590	NEW
Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1919	Birth, Marriage & Death	1,543,820	NEW
Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812	Birth, Marriage & Death	1,763,383	NEW
Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Burials, 1813-1994	Birth, Marriage & Death	284,904	NEW
U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-2016	Directories & Member Lists	799,395,894	UPDATED
Mexico, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current	Birth, Marriage & Death	52,524	UPDATED
Washington, U.S., Masters and Owners of Vessels Oaths, 1916-1967	Court, Land, Will & Financial	48,830	NEW
Norway, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current	Birth, Marriage & Death	200,269	UPDATED
1810 United States Federal Census	Census & Voter Lists	832,889	UPDATED
Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current	Birth, Marriage & Death	9,833,336	UPDATED
Germany, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current	Birth, Marriage & Death	1,999,171	UPDATED

Filter By Location

- Aguascalientes 15
- Baja California 12
- Baja California Sur 15
- Campeche 15
- Chiapas 14
- Chihuahua 15
- Coahuila de Zaragoza 14
- Colima 15
- Durango 15
- Federal District 14
- Guanajuato 15
- Guerrero 15
- Hidalgo 15
- Jalisco 15
- México 15
- Michoacán de Ocampo 15
- Morelos 15
- Nayarit 15
- Nuevo León 16
- Oaxaca 15
- Puebla 15
- Querétaro de Arteaga 15
- Quintana Roo 13
- San Luis Potosí 15
- Sinaloa 12
- Sonora 15

Card Catalog
Searchable listing of all record collections

Results 1-15 of 15

Title	Category	Records	Activity
Mexico, Select Church Records, 1537-1966 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	41,624,175	
Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Births, 1866-1948 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	702,107	
Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Deaths, 1862-1967 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	1,405,453	
Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Marriages, 1857-1950 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	674,619	
Sonora, Mexico, Catholic Church Records, 1657-1994 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	786,643	
Mexico, Find a Grave Index, 1800s-Current	Birth, Marriage & Death	52,524	UPDATED
Mexico, Select Marriages Index, 1556-1989 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	20,282,212	
Mexico, Select Deaths, 1680-1940 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	687,965	
Mexico, Select Baptisms, 1560-1950 (in Spanish)	Birth, Marriage & Death	110,966,678	
1930 Mexico National Census (in Spanish)	Census & Voter Lists	12,875,759	
Nacogdoches, Texas, U.S., Spanish and Mexican Government Records, 1729-1836 (in Spanish)	Court, Land, Will & Financial	15,994	
Hispanic Surnames and Family History, 1996	Dictionaries, Encyclopedias & Reference	341	
Mexico Historical Postcards, 1893-1963 (in Spanish)	Pictures	12,242	
Historical and Genealogical Account of the Family of Vance (Vans, Vaux, and De Vaux)	Directories & Member Lists	46	

Let's try to find **Arturo Figueroa** using **Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Births, 1866-1930**, as shown by the red arrow above.

Click on that collection and follow the instructions on page 7.

Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Births, 1866-1948

Sonora, México, Registro Civil, Nacimientos, 1866-1948

These records are in Spanish. For best results, you should search using Spanish words and location spellings.

Search Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Exact... Exact...

Birth Location

Any Event

Add family member: Father Mother

Spouse Child

Keyword

Page Number

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

City

Year

Related data collections

[Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Marriages, 1857-1950](#)
Did your Mexican ancestors tie the knot in Sonora? Check these civil marriage registrations to find out.

[Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Deaths, 1862-1987](#)
These civil death records from Sonora can include names for parents and a spouse as well as the deceased.

[1930 Mexico National Census](#)
Mexico's 1930 national census ("El Quinto Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1930, México") is both the largest and most recent Mexican census to be made available to the public. With approximately 12.8 million names, the 1930 Mexico National Census database is a good starting place for Mexican research in that era, especially if family, vital, or religious records are missing.

Type "arturo" and "figueroa" into the name spaces. For birth year, choose 1925 +/- 5 years. Do not click the "Match all terms exactly" box, to allow for potential spelling variations. *Click* SEARCH. Our 5 results appear below.

All Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Births, 1866-1948 results for Arturo Figueroa

Your search

Results 1-5 of 5

View Record	Name	Birth Date	Birth Registration Place	Registration Date	Parents	View Images
View Record	Francisco A. Figueroa	4 ago. 1923 (4 Aug 1923)	Seris	4 ago. 1923 (4 Aug 1923)	Francisco F. Figueroa, María Armenta	
View Record	Ella A. Figueroa	20 Jun. 1928	Teonadepa	26 Jun. 1928	Teodoro N. Figueroa, Ramona Abril de Figueroa	
View Record	María Dellina A. Figueroa	30 ago. 1928 (30 Aug 1928)	Oquitoo	9 sep. 1928	Antonio C. Figueroa, María Almazán de Figueroa	
View Record	Pedro A. Figueroa	15 ene. 1929 (15 Jan 1929)	San Pedro De La cueva	9 abr. 1929 (9 Apr 1929)	Francisco Figueroa, Trinidad Figueroa	
View Record	Amado A. Figueroa	17 ene. 1921 (17 Jan 1921)	Teonadepa	22 ene. 1921 (22 Jan 1921)	Teodoro Figueroa, Ramona Abril de Figueroa	

1-5 of 5 Per page: 20

Our Arturo Figueroa can't be located in this collection, so we'll use a broader approach to try to find him. Go to the *Ancestry* homepage and *click* Search, then click All Categories. Fill in the search wells as shown below, then *click* the Search button. This gives 8 results...hopefully, one of those is our Arturo. **If not, you'll need to BROWSE Ancestry's records** (see above).

Search

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Exact Exact

Place your ancestor might have lived Exact to this place

Search [Show more options](#)

Birth Year

Exact to...
 this year
 +/-1 year
 +/-2 years
 +/-5 years
 +/-10 years

Explore by location

Explore by collection

- [Birth, marriage & death](#)
- [Birth, baptism & christening](#)
- [Marriage & divorce](#)
- [Death, burial, cemetery & obituaries](#)
- [Census & voter lists](#)
- [U.S. Federal Census Collection](#)
- [UK Census Collection](#)
- [Canadian Census Collection](#)
- [More...](#)
- [Immigration & travel](#)
- [Passenger lists](#)
- [Citizenship & naturalization records](#)
- [Border crossings & passports](#)
- [More...](#)
- [Military](#)
- [Draft, enlistment and service](#)
- [Casualties](#)
- [Soldier, veteran & prisoner rolls & lists](#)
- [More...](#)
- [Schools, directories & church histories](#)
- [City & area directories](#)
- [Professional & organizational directories](#)
- [Church histories & records](#)

All results for Arturo Figueroa

Your search

Found in Ancestry trees

[Arturo Esparza Figueroa](#)
 Mother: Regina Garcia Herrera
 Birth: 20 Jul 1923 Nacoacan de Garcia, Nacoacan de Garcia, Sonora, Mexico
 Death: México, Mexico
 Residence: 15 May 1930 Moctezuma, Moctezuma, Sonora, Mexico

1-8 of 8

View Record	Sonora, Mexico, Civil Registration Deaths, 1862-1987	Name: Arturo Alvarez Figueroa Birth: abt 1921 Death: 10 Jul 1947 (10 Jul 1947) Magdalena de Kino, Sonora, México (Mexico)
View Record	1930 Mexico National Census 1930s	Name: Arturo E Figueroa Birth: abt 1923 Sonora Residence: 15 May 1930 (15 May 1930) Agua Prieta, Agua Prieta, Sonora
View Record	U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007	Name: Arturo Duran Figueroa [Arturo F Duran] Birth: 12 Jun 1921 Guaymas Sono, Mexico Death: 21 Apr 1999
View Record	Mexico, Select Church Records, 1937-1966	Name: Jose Arturo Gutierrez Figueroa Mother: Santos Figueroa Father: Figueroa Gutierrez Baptism: 25 ene. 1927 (25 Jan 1927) La Asunción, Hermosillo, Sonora, México

YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO ...

Google or **Duck-Duck-Go** names, placing them inside quotation marks - i.e. "Arturo Figueroa" or "José Arturo Figueroa"

Try the **Mexican version of Ancestry.com (ancestry.mx)**...if you have a paid (\$\$) Ancestry.com subscription.

Examine **books** on our shelves for Arizona and New Mexico, as portions of them were a part of Mexico as of the early 1850s