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# *Six Ways to Research Your New Mexico Family History*

BY EMILY WITHNALL

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New Mexico is brimming with genealogical resources to help you discover who your ancestors were and where they came from. Conducting genealogical research is an art and a science. Although DNA testing can now tell us a lot about where our ancestors came from, stories, names, and traditions can sometimes reveal untraceable details like our ancestors' faiths. Professional genealogist Schelly Talalay Dardashti, an expert on Sephardic Jewish genealogy, says that although conversos and crypto-Jews who arrived in New Mexico with Oñate changed their names to avoid persecution, many Jewish cultural practices survived. In keeping with the Torah's commandment to "take challah," for example, some New Mexico families burn the first ball of tortilla dough just as Jewish bakers burn an olive-sized ball of matzo or challah as an offering before the bread is baked.

**VISIT A LIBRARY** The Albuquerque Main Public Library, at 501 Copper Ave NW, is home to the Genealogy Center; its comprehensive resources have made it a tourist destination for genealogists from around the country. The library offers free access to ancestry.com, Fold3 (military records from the American Revolution on), World Vital Records (international collections, millions of family trees, and complete US census records for 1790–1940), and American Ancestors (New England Collections). It also offers an archive of New Mexico newspapers from 1849 to 2012. The center also has over 31,000 books on genealogy and family history, organized by state and county, and microfilm documents from the late 1600s, including early Catholic Church records, and Spanish, Mexican, and Territorial archives. Volunteers at the library are often available to help with research assistance, with two official research days each month. Military Research Day is scheduled for the

first Tuesday of every month from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Genealogy Research Day occurs the last Tuesday of each month from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. If you are unable to come to the library, some assistance is also offered via email ([librarygenealogy@cabq.gov](mailto:librarygenealogy@cabq.gov)).

The New Mexico State Library's Southwest Collection, at 1209 Camino Carlos Rey in Santa Fe, contains resources similar to those of the Albuquerque Main Library, but every library's collection contains unique records. A continually updated digital archive of state government documents and publications is available through the collection, along with access to specialists who can help you with your research. In addition to the Southwest Collection, the New Mexico State Library houses the State and Federal Collections, as well as the New Mexico State Archives. The collection is open from 1 to 5 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. Contact the Southwest Collection Reference Desk at 505-476-9790 or [SouthwestRoom@state.nm.us](mailto:SouthwestRoom@state.nm.us).

Discovering detailed stories about your ancestors can be one of the most exciting parts of mapping your family tree. According to archivist Nancy Brown-Martinez, the University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections contains one-of-a-kind collections that help New Mexico families discover the details of their ancestors' lives. The library is in the center of UNM's south campus, off University Boulevard NE in Albuquerque. The library's other unique offerings include the Rocky Mountain Online Archive ([rmoa.unm.edu](http://rmoa.unm.edu)), which contains primary-source collections in New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, and access to the New Mexico Digital Collection ([econtent.unm.edu](http://econtent.unm.edu)), an archive of photos, music, maps, letters, manuscripts, and other historical and cultural documents from 120 museums, libraries, and cultural centers across the state.

### **VISIT THE SANTA FE FAMILY HISTORY CENTER**

Housed in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 410 Rodeo Road, the Santa Fe Family History Center (FHC) is open to all. The FHC provides free access to online archives such as Ancestry.com, Fold3, and the LDS familysearch.org, which contains the largest genealogy archives in the nation and can be accessed for free from home as well. Familysearch.org is continually updated by the LDS Church in Salt Lake City, but any records that are not online can be ordered from their catalogue. There are usually at least two volunteers at the FHC who can help you with your research. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays, 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays, and 9 a.m. to noon Thursdays and Saturdays. To access the FHC's resources at other times, call 505-982-9233 to schedule an appointment.

### **JOIN THE NEW MEXICO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

Henrietta Martinez Christmas, president of the New Mexico Genealogical Society (NMGS), says New Mexico has the oldest records in the continental United States. With the largest membership of any genealogical society in the state, NMGS facilitates workshops, brings in expert speakers, and provides many opportunities for members to collaborate and assist each other in genealogical research. NMGS also provides records and research assistance to the state art records, state archives, and the state historian, and provides resources and volunteers to the Genealogy Center at the Main Library in Albuquerque. NMGS membership is \$25 a year and gives you access to an extensive monthly newsletter and the quarterly journal *New Mexico Genealogist*. NMGS also sells genealogical books on their website (nmgs.org).

### **SET UP AN APPOINTMENT TO VISIT THE SANTA FE ARCHDIOCESE**

The archdiocese has a microfilm archive dating back to 1678 that includes New Mexico baptismal, marriage, and death records. Unlike county clerk offices, however, the archdiocese is unable to accommodate walk-in researchers and is open by appointment only. Bernadette Lucero, the archdiocese museum and archive curator, encourages independent researchers to call 505-983-3811 to schedule an appointment a month in advance. The NMGS has an online index of the records available at the archdiocese at nmgs.org. For those on a tight

schedule, copies of the archdiocese microfilm records are available at a handful of other locations around the state.

### **BECOME A DAUGHTER OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

If you suspect you have an ancestor who served in the American Revolution or supported the troops in some way during the American Revolution, consider joining the Stephen Watts Kearny branch of Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). This branch has also recently expanded its scope to include women with ancestors who were colonial Spanish presidio soldiers in New Mexico in the 1700s. To become an official member of DAR you will need to provide documentation for each family member linking you to your patriot ancestor; DAR can help you track it down. The membership application fee is approximately \$140, and annual dues are \$65. These fees grant members access to the National DAR archives online, as well as to the museum and physical collections in Washington, DC. The Santa Fe chapter of DAR has 100 members and meets monthly on the third Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. at Holy Faith Episcopal Church. Those interested in joining can contact registrar Mary Ann Thornton at mathornton@comcast.net.

**TEST YOUR DNA** A genetic DNA test won't necessarily tell you who is in your family, but it can reveal important clues. 23andMe provides the most comprehensive test options, offering three different tests for \$199. The tests match users with other company customers based on the percentage of shared DNA and help trace your maternal and paternal lineages. 23andMe is also the only company that provides medical and traits results in addition to genealogy reports.

If you have Spanish heritage, you may want to consider testing with the New Mexico DNA Project (familytreedna.com/public/newmexicoDNA), run by Family Tree DNA. Ronaldo Miera, president of the Hispanic Genealogical Research Center, says the New Mexico DNA Project shows that in most Hispanic families, the female line contains 80 percent of what he calls New World DNA (Native and mestizo), and the male line contains 90 percent of what he calls Old World DNA (European, African, and Middle Eastern). He attributes this to the fact that few Spanish women were a part of the 1598 Juan de Oñate settlement and the 1692 Diego de Vargas settlement. ■