

How to find church documents from Piura, Perú

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As a student of the genealogy of the Seminarios and related families, the lack of digitized records from Piura has been a major obstacle to my research.

In January 2016, I wrote to the Diocese of Piura requesting copies of 85 documents and submitting, per their instructions, an international money order for 300 dollars. They did not locate a single document and refused to return the money.

About a month ago, I discovered that baptismal, marriage and death certificates recorded by the Cathedral of San Miguel Arcángel in Piura are available on microfilm via Family Search.org.

Microfilm searches are a lot harder than online searches. When accessing the microfilm, you see copies of pages from the books where the priests wrote their entries. If you know the date of baptism, marriage or death, you can scan through the pages quickly until you find the correct date. But if you don't know it, you have to go page by page, and that handwriting from the 15th through 17th centuries can be really hard to read.

For some documents, there are handwritten indexes prepared by the priests that help locate the records. But sometimes they don't work that well. For example, for the Rodriguez de Taboada family, I've found some entries under Rodriguez and others under Taboada. I've also found several documents in the books that for some reason weren't included in the index.

Baptismal records for the Cathedral of San Miguel Arcángel exist from 1666 to 2002, marriage records from 1666 to 1940 and 1947 to 2002, and death records from 1666 to 1933. Some microfilms cover the other parishes in the city and province of Piura.

The microfilms can be viewed at www.FamilySearch.org . Click on Search and then Catalog. In the space for Place, enter "Piura" and then choose the option for "Peru, Piura, Piura". That will get you into the list of records for the Cathedral and other city parishes. If you are looking for records from Paita or Sullana, click on "Peru, Piura" and that will show you the list of what is available in the province. From the lists, you can go directly to the microfilms.

To save time, check to see if another researcher has already found the documents you are looking for. You can check my website, www.noblezaseminario.com, and click on Search and then Search by Last Name. If you find your person on my list, you'll see a page with all the information, photos and documents I have for them. For those who records I've found on microfilm, I have an extract of the record with the key information.

The extract form shows the microfilm and image numbers that allow you to see the original record on FamilySearch. The problem with my website is that I only have people who lived before 1800.

I also highly recommend the website [gwennyalogy.com](http://www.gwennyalogy.com) created and maintained by Mrs. Gwendolyn Cunningham, a very dedicated American researcher. Her daughter-in-law is from Sullana, and Mrs. Cunningham has set out to document all of her Peruvian and Ecuadorian ancestors. What is amazing is that Mrs. Cunningham does not speak Spanish, but has learned the relevant words by studying the records. For each person in her database, she records in her Notes a transcription of the microfilm record, translating the words she knows into English and leaving the rest in Spanish. In addition to her transcriptions, she records the microfilm and image numbers.

With those numbers, you can find the original records in Spanish very quickly. Go into FamilySearch.org by the same route previously described, but when you get to the Place screen, you'll see a button for Microfilm/Microfiche Number. Click on that and enter the microfilm number. Once you load the microfilm, enter the image number, and you will go directly to the page that has your document.

I recommend accessing Mrs. Cunningham's website via this page:
http://www.south-america.gwennyalogy.org/wc_idx/idx001.html . It is an index of all the South American surnames she has in her database. There are about 500 surnames.

Good luck with your searches!