

Finding Your Guatemalan Roots

By Walter Kevin Sánchez | Entre Archivos, July 2025

Where do I start?

- Start at home: Talk to relatives and gather family stories, photos, and documents.
- Write down what you know: Full names, places, key dates (births, marriages, deaths).
- Identify the town of origin: Most Guatemalan records are local.
- Look for documents in both English and Spanish (immigration papers, church records, passports).
- Use free platforms like FamilySearch to begin building your tree.

Timeline

- 1524 – Spanish conquest begins.
- Late 16th century – Sacramental, notarial, and administrative records begin.
- 1821 – Independence from Spain.
- 1877 – Civil Registration begins (Liberal Reform).
- 1932 – National ID cards (cédulas de vecindad) introduced.
- 1970s – Start of digitization of historical records.

Key Records

- Sacramental Records: Baptisms, marriages, marriage files, and burials.
- Civil Registration: Births, marriages, deaths; may include occupation, place of origin, parents, photos.
- Notarial Records: Wills, contracts, deeds; great for tracing family networks.
- Newspapers: Social notices, vital events, immigration; check “El Imparcial” in FamilySearch.
- Censuses: Names, age, marital status, occupation, ethnicity.

Archives and Resources

- [FamilySearch](#)
- [FamilySearch Wiki](#)
- [Walter Sanchez Genealogy](#) Blog
- [GeneaGuate](#) Facebook Group
- [Archivo Historico Arquidiocesano de Guatemala](#)
- [Archivo General de Centro América](#)
- [Hemeroteca Nacional](#)

Tips

- Always verify with multiple sources.
- Note full names, dates, places.
- Learn local history and geography.
- Use both online and physical archives.
- Stay patient and organized.
- Consult experts or join genealogy groups.