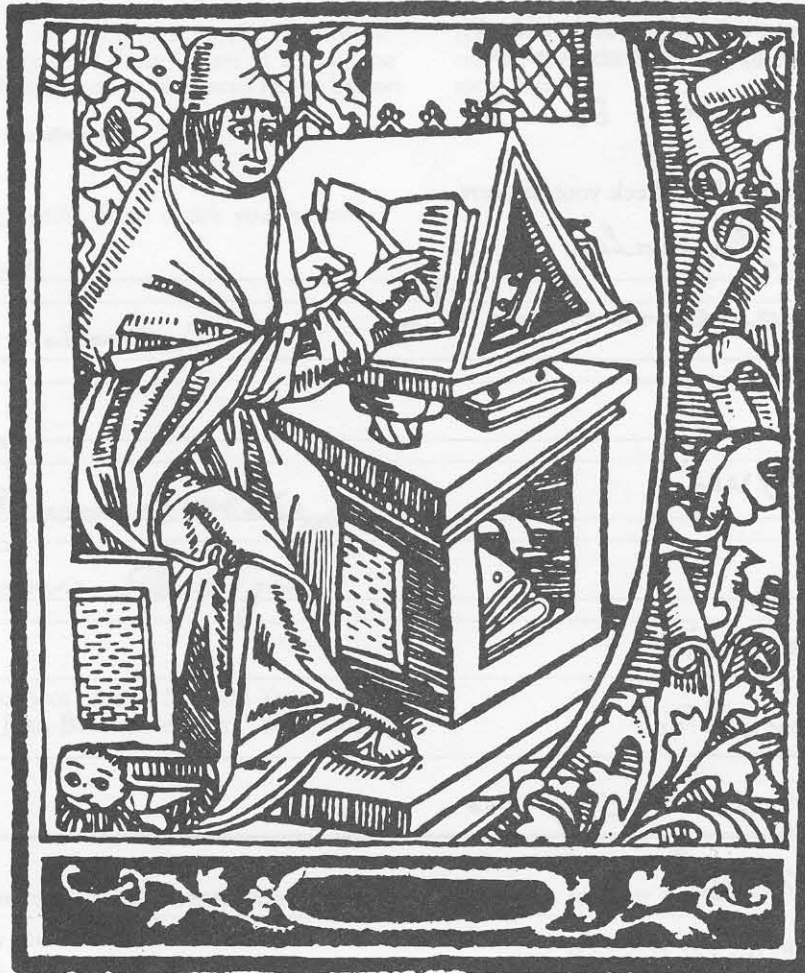


Section Three  
**VARIATIONS IN WORD SPELLING**



**Interchanging Letters**

Although Spanish spelling was standardized in the mid-1700s, scribes usually spelled words the way they thought the words sounded rather than the way they may have appeared in a dictionary. Because some letters were pronounced the same or very similarly, scribes often used one for the other. The chart which follows shows the letters most often used interchangeably. (Some of these variations reflect foreign influence and local dialects.)

If a word you cannot recognize in the document has one of the letters in the left-hand column, try replacing the letter with a corresponding one from the second column. Then see if you recognize the word. You may have to make more than one substitution before you can recognize a word. *Viente*, for example, could be spelled *beynte* by using interchangeable letters.

Letter	Substitute Letter	Examples	Letter	Substitute Letter	Examples
b	p	Ruberta for Ruperta	f	v	Felásquez for Velásquez
	u	babtizó for bautizó		b	aguelos for abuelos
	v	parbulc for parvulo	g	c	Gutberto for Cutberto
c	s	ciete for siete		h	Chiguagua for Chihuahua
	x	Macimo for Maximo		j	Muger for Mujer
	z	marco for marzo	i	y	maio for mayo
ch	c	chrisma for crisma	j	g	lejítimo for legítimo
d	r	Idiarte for Iriarte		i	domjngo for domingo
				x	Méjico for México

Letter	Substitute Letter	Examples	Letter	Substitute Letter	Examples
Jou	Ju	Jouan for Juan	ss	x	Messico for México
k	j	Trukillo for Trujillo	th	t	theniente for teniente
l	r	Guillelmo for Guillermo	u	v	esclauo for esclavo
ll	y	mallo for mayo	v	b	vautizó for bautizó
n	m	iten for item		u	vno for uno
p	u	baptizó for bautizo	x	c	diexiocho for dieciocho
ph	f	Josepha for Josefa		g	lexítimo for legítimo
qu	cu	quate for cuate		j	dixeron for dijeron
r	l	Corneria for Cornelia	y	s	parentexco for parentesco
s	c	conosido for conocido		i	yndio for indio
	x	espuesto for expuesto		ll	donceya for doncella
	z	bautisó for bautizó	z	c	bautizé for bauticé
				s	parentezco for parentesco

## Other Spelling Variations

Besides interchanging one letter for another, a scribe may have varied spelling in the following ways:

1. He may have added an *h* to a word, for example, *henero* for *enero*. The letter *h* is not pronounced. *H*'s are most often added to the beginning of words and names that begin with vowels (*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, or *u*), for example, **Hesteban** for **Esteban**.
2. He may have dropped an *h* that should be in a word or name, such as **Onorata** for **Honorata**.
3. He may have added a *g* to a word or name that usually does not have one, for example **Ignocencia** for **Inocencia**.
4. He may have added a *d*, for example, **Estanislado** for **Estanislao**.
5. He may have dropped part of a name, for example, **Staquoio** for **Eustaquoio** or **Sensión** for **Ascensión**.
6. He may have doubled a letter that should not be doubled, for example, *pusse* for *puse*. In Spanish, *l* and *ll* are separate letters, as are *r* and *rr*. They cannot be used

interchangeably in modern Spanish without changing the meaning of the word. For example, *pero* means "but," but *perro* means "dog." Some scribes, however, regularly wrote *ll* for *l*, for example, *jullio* for *julio*. So *ll* and *rr* may represent those letters, or they may be the single letters—*l* and *r*—doubled.

Although some spelling differences are predictable, others may have been due to the scribe's carelessness or lack of education. Keep an open mind when reading old records, and allow for words that may have been spelled in unfamiliar or imaginative ways.

You may have noticed that some of the words used to illustrate spelling differences are personal names. If you find a personal name that has been spelled differently, for example **Ypolita** for **Hipolita**, extract it as it is written in the record, not as it should be written. The examples are given to help you recognize such names, not to show you how to write them.

The letters *k* and *w* are not considered part of the Spanish alphabet. They are generally only used in foreign words and names (including Indian names).

## Capitalization

The less you know about capitalization the better, at least when it comes to extracting Spanish records. Some scribes followed careful rules of capitalization, capitalizing only place names and personal names. Most scribes, however,

were inconsistent in their use of capital letters. Don't depend on capitalization as a clue to the meaning or nature of a word.

## Contractions

Just as we contract short, common words in English (for example, *do not* becomes *don't*), so Spanish speakers contract certain words. *De* ("of" or "from") and *el* ("the") become *del*; *a* ("to") and *el* become *al*. In early records these

words are not always contracted, and some other words are contracted that are not in modern Spanish. For example, *de* ("of") and *este* ("this") may be written *deste*.

## Abbreviations

An abbreviation is a word that has had one or more letters dropped from it. Abbreviations were much more common a century ago than they are today. Paper and ink were expensive items, and writing with the old quill pens was laborious. To save time, paper, and ink, scribes shortened words. Almost any word could be abbreviated.

The following guidelines may help you recognize and interpret abbreviations:

1. Although any letter but the first letter could be left out of a word, most abbreviations give the last letter or letters, for example, **Fran<sup>co</sup>** for **Francisco** and **Hrnz.** for **Hernandez**.

2. Most scribes indicated abbreviations by using one or more of the following signs:

a. Dropping letters from a word or name, for example, **Rodz.** for **Rodriguez**.

b. Using a period, for example, *dbre.* for *diciembre*.

c. Using a raised letter or letters, for example, *set<sup>os</sup>* for *setecientos*.

3. The last four months of the year had the following numerical abbreviations:

7bre = setiembre  
8bre = octubre  
9bre = noviembre  
10bre = diciembre

*Diciembre* may also be abbreviated *Xbre*.

These abbreviations are carry-overs from the old Julian calendar, in which these were the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth months. The abbreviations continued to be used long after the Julian calendar was replaced by the present Gregorian calendar in the 1500s. These abbreviations should be easy to remember because each month begins with the same letter as the Spanish word for the corresponding number:

7bre = setiembre	7 = siete
8bre = octubre	8 = ocho
9bre = noviembre	9 = nueve
10bre = diciembre	10 = diez

4. The letter **X** was often used as an abbreviation for **Cristo**, as in **Xpoval**, an abbreviation for the name **Cristoval**.

5. A double letter used as an abbreviation indicates a plural word. For example, **PP** usually stands for *padrinos*; **AA**. **PP** stands for *abuelos paternos*.

As was mentioned above, there are several methods of abbreviating: (1) dropping letters, (2) using a period, and (3) using raised letters. The sample christening entry below contains examples of all three methods.

1. *En la Parroquia de S<sup>n</sup> Mig<sup>l</sup> a veinte de 9<sup>ta</sup> de mil*
2. *sete<sup>cos</sup> ochenta y uno el Pbro. D. Jos<sup>e</sup> Man<sup>l</sup>. Lopez*
3. *bautizo y puso oleo y crisma a Ju<sup>o</sup> Ant<sup>o</sup> h. l. de*
4. *Jos<sup>e</sup> F<sup>co</sup> Perez y de M<sup>ca</sup>. Hernandez. A. P. Juan Perez*
5. *y M<sup>ca</sup>. Y<sup>ra</sup> A. M. Lorenzo Min. y Sara Rod<sup>z</sup>.*
6. *Padrinos P<sup>o</sup>. Ramos y M<sup>ca</sup> Gomez a quienes advertio*
7. *de su obligacion.*
8. *Don Jos<sup>e</sup> Manuel Lopez*

Notice the abbreviations in the sample entry found on the following lines:

1. Sn Migl (San Miguel) and 9<sup>bre</sup> (noviembre)
2. sete<sup>cos</sup> (setecientos); Pbro (Presbítero); D. (Don) and Man<sup>l</sup> (Manuel)
3. Ju<sup>o</sup> (Juan); Ant<sup>o</sup> (Antonio) and h.l. (hijo legítimo)
4. Fco (Francisco); Ma (María); Hernez. (Hernandez) A.P. (Abuelos Paterno)
5. Ma (María); Gra (García); A.M. (Abuelos Maternos); Min. (Martín) and Rod<sup>z</sup> (Rodriguez)
6. P<sup>o</sup> (Pedro) and Ma (María)

Letters have been dropped in all of the abbreviations identified above. A period has been used in several instances, and raised letters have been used to indicate an abbreviation.

These three methods of abbreviating—dropping letters, using a period, and raising letters—are by far the most common. Each is generally used in combination with one or more of the other methods.

### Translation

In the parish of San Miguel on the 20th of November 1781 the priest Don Jose Manuel Lopez baptized and placed oil and christening on Juan Antonio legitimate son of Jose Francisco Perez and of Maria Hernandez—paternal grandparents Juan Perez and Maria Garcia. Maternal grandparents Lorenzo Martin and Sara Rodriguez, godparents Pedro Ramos and Maria Gomes whom he advised of their (spiritual) obligation.  
Don Jose Manuel Lopez

For a list of commonly used abbreviations, see Appendix B.