CHAPTER FOUR

NAME IDENTIFICATION

Personal names are the single most important item the Genealogical Department uses in identifying individuals for temple ordinance work. Therefore, it is critical that you read and extract personal names from the records accurately.

You will need to develop several related abilities in order to identify the names of individuals. First, you must be able to recognize personal names and distinguish them from names of races, occupations, titles, and other terms. Second, you must be able to decipher the spelling of a name, so that you can determine what the name actually is. Third, you must be able to distinguish between an individual's given name(s) and surname(s).

The purpose of this chapter is to enable you to develop the abilities to clearly identify personal names. It consists of the following sections:

Section 1—Identifying Names
Section 2—Deciphering Personal Names
Section 3—Distinguishing Between Given Names and Surnames
IDENTIFYING NAMES

Before you can identify a personal name in a christening or marriage entry, you must be able to locate it. Chapter 2 presented the formats used in both christening and marriage entries and noted the common phrases used in connection with each part of the entries. It will be to your advantage to become thoroughly familiar with both entry formats and key phrases.

When it comes to recognizing personal names in a christening or marriage entry, there is no substitute for being familiar with as many Spanish names as possible. To help you learn these names, some of the most common given names and surnames are provided in Appendix A.

Distinguishing Names from Other Items

Once you have found a name, it is often hard to tell where the name starts and where it ends. Therefore, you should learn the words that commonly precede and follow names.

Items That Precede Names

1. Personal a. In Spanish, when a person's name follows a verb it is preceded by the word a, which has no meaning in English. For example, bautizó a Juan means "I baptized Juan." The a does not translate. It is not part of the name, even though some scribes may have written it as if it were part of the name:

Bautizó solemnmente a Miguel
He solemnly baptized Miguel (not "Amiguel")

If you cannot find a name that you think begins with A in Appendix A or in a names catalog, drop the A and see if you can find it then.

2. Particles. The particles de, del, de la, de las, and de los are part of many Spanish given names (for example, Juan de Dios and María del Refugio) and surnames (for example, De la Cruz and Del Campo). But these words are never the first given name. Some beginning extractors see the phrase hijo legítimo de Jesus Salcedo, for example, and record the father's name as de Jesus Salcedo. If you think that someone's first name is de, look again. The word de ("of") belongs to the preceding phrase.

3. Titles. The most common titles found in parish registers are Don and Doña. Don is roughly equivalent to "Mr." or "esquire" in English. The feminine equivalent is Doña. For a list of the most common titles and descriptive terms, see Appendix E.

Occasionally some other title will precede a given name. For example, many of the occupations listed in Appendix C can also be titles. You can usually recognize these other titles because they are preceded by the word el (or del), for example, hijo del soldado José Chavez ("son of the soldier José Chavez"). If the father did not have a title, the phrase would be hijo de José Chavez.

Items That Follow Names

Knowing where a name starts is usually easier than knowing where it ends. A person may have any number of names, which may be followed by words that often resemble names. Most often, the word which resembles a personal name is either the name of an occupation, racial designation, or locality.

1. Occupational Names. Occupations are sometimes recorded following the names of the individuals mentioned in the entry. When they appear, they almost always follow the surnames or, if no surnames are given, they follow the last given name. The names of occupations are usually not capitalized. Below are shown some examples of how
personal names and occupational titles might appear in an entry:

- hija de Alfredo Bravo herrero y Madalena García
daughter of Alfredo Bravo (the) smith and Madalena García

- abuelos Joaquín de San Miguel, campañero y María de la Concepción
grandparents de San Miguel, (the) bellmaker and María de la Concepción

- padrino Carlos Garza cortador de jabón
godfather Carlos Garza soap cutter

For a list of some of the most common occupations, see Appendix C.

2. Racial Designations. The name of an individual’s race is sometimes given in the record. When it appears, like occupational names, it almost always follows the surnames. If no surname is given, the racial designation will follow the last given name. Following are examples of how personal names and racial designations might appear:

- hijo legítimo de Juan mestizo
  legitimate son of Juan (a) mestizo (Spanish-Indian)

- padrino Félix Barajas saltatras
godfather Felix Barajas saltatras (Spanish-Negro)

- casé y belé a Carlos Zamora lobo
married and veiled carlos Zamora lobo (Negro-Indian)

For a list of races and subraces, see Appendix D.

3. Localities. Many cities and towns (localities) in Spain and Colonial Latin America were named after important people in the Catholic church or significant religious occurrences. Many of the names of localities are also used as Spanish proper names.

A priest, on occasion, will list a locality (birthplace or place of residence) along with a name. The locality will usually follow the principal’s given name(s) or the parent’s surname(s). The locality may also appear in the margin.

Most often the localities will be repeated frequently from entry to entry and are easy to distinguish. However, it is sometimes necessary to study the names of the cities and villages in the parish being extracted to determine when an item in an entry is a name or a locality.

Identifying the Entire Name

Sometimes the letters y or y de may appear in connection with a name or names. Be sure to look at the entire name phrase. These words may introduce new information, or they may introduce the second part of a compound surname. For example, if an entry reads, hijo de Juan Lopez y Juana Perez, the child’s parents are Juan Lopez and Juana Perez. But if it reads, hijo de Juan Lopez y Perez, the father’s name is Juan Lopez y Perez, and you would have to read further to find the mother’s name.

Self-Evaluation

Draw circles around the names found in the phrases below. If you are not certain if a word is a name or something else, refer to the Appendix or Glossary.

1. bapcié a nicoLás

2. hija de madalena negra esclava

3. padrinos diego de La crus y Ana María negros

4. bapcié a Jusepa India

5. hija de Antón y Inés criados de Francisca de Barnos

6. hija de Gerónimo de bañuelas y M. del Río su Muger

7. Padrino El Maestre de Campo Francisco Montañño de La Cueba

Answers

1. nicoLás  2. madalena  3. diego de La crus; Ana María  4. Jusepa  5. Antón; Inés; Francisca de Barnos  6. Gerónimo; M. Del Río  7. Francisco Montañño