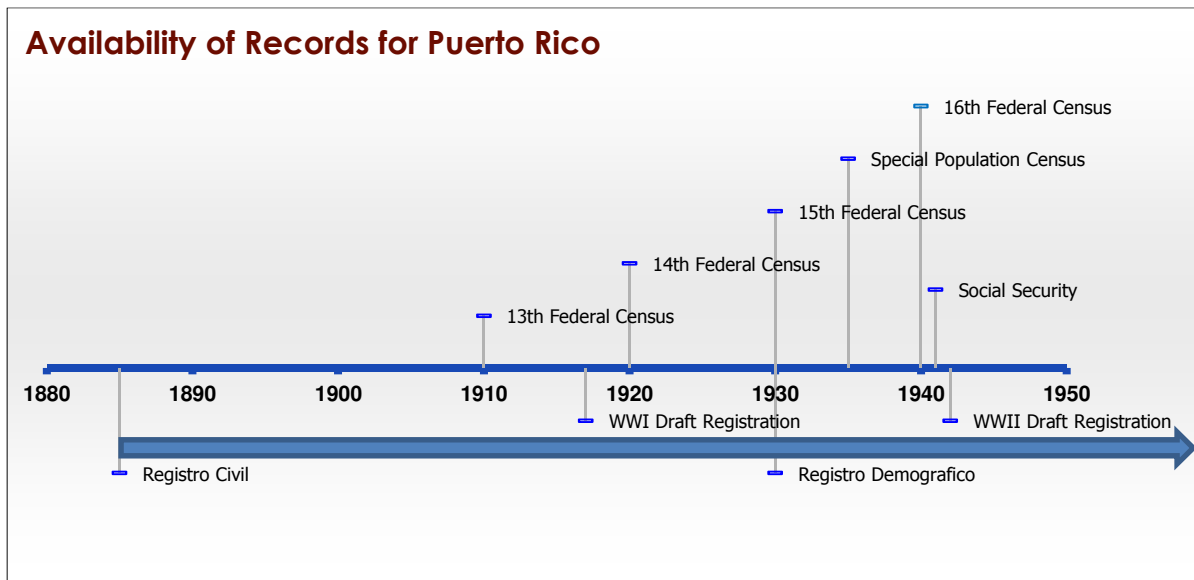


A Beginner's Guide

by: Martin Nieves

Availability of Records for Puerto Rico



Social Security Administration

To be eligible for a social security number in Puerto Rico an individual must meet one of the following criteria:

- Been born in Puerto Rico after January 12, 1941 and subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. at birth; or
- Born in Puerto Rico on or after April 11, 1899 and before January 13, 1941 and living in the U.S., Puerto Rico or a U.S. territory on January 13, 1941; or
- Who is a Puerto Rico native and was residing in Puerto Rico on March 2, 1917 and did not take an oath of allegiance to Spain.

Any person who received a Social Security number and died after 1962 may be found in the Social Security Death Index (SSDI). These indexes can be searched online at www.ancestry.com or www.familysearch.org (free).

United States Federal Census records

The United States government conducts population censuses every 10 years. The oldest surviving census for Puerto Rico under U.S. jurisdiction is the 13th Federal Census of 1910. The 1910, 1920 and 1930 censuses are available on several commercial sites online.

In 1935 a special population census was conducted in Puerto Rico. This census is available at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and New York City.

The 1940 Census is scheduled to become available to the public on April 1, 2012.

U.S. Military Records

The Jones-Shafroth Act granted Puerto Ricans with U.S. Citizenship on March 2, 1917. On April 6, 1917 The United States declared war on Germany and entered the Great War (World War I). The Selective Service Act was enacted on May 18, 1917. Registration for the World War I draft began June 5, 1917.

Both the World War I and World War II draft registration cards are available online through some commercial sites such as www.ancestry.com. It is important to know that not all men registered actually served in the armed forces. For WWII there were actually seven registrations yet only the fourth registration is available due to privacy issues.

Civil Registration

Civil registration in Puerto Rico began on January 1, 1885 as a result on the 1869 Spanish constitution. On September 1868 the Spanish monarchy was overthrown and Queen Isabel II was forced into exile. The constitution of 1869 established the first civil government for Spain. In 1931, this civil registry was reorganized into the current Demographic Registry of Puerto Rico. This institution began under Spanish rule and continues today. This is perhaps the most reliable and continuous registry available for Puerto Rico. Many of these records are now available online at www.familysearch.org.

Roman Catholic Church records

Prior to 1885 genealogists must rely mainly on records of the Roman Catholic Church and select local archives throughout the island. Many parishes do not have their archives available to the public and in some cases church records have been lost for all time.

The following is a list of the 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico with date it was established and from which other municipality it separated. Some of these dates are often debated by historians. This is not intended to be a historical account of the towns of Puerto Rico but simply a guide to assist those with the desire of researching their ancestry in these towns. I make no claims as to the accuracy of the information I've collected for this file.

- Caparra (1508)
 - San Juan (1509 & 1521)
 - Guaynabo (1769)
 - Bayamon (1772)
 - Comerio (1826)
 - Cataño (1927)
- Santa Maria de Guadianilla (1511)
 - San German (1570)
 - Añasco (1733)
 - Yauco (1756)
 - Peñuelas (1793)
 - Guayanilla (1833)
 - Guanica (1914)
 - Mayaguez (1763)
 - Cabo Rojo (1771)
 - Sabana Grande (1813)
 - Hormigueros (1874)
 - Maricao (1874)
 - Lajas (1883)
- Coamo (1579)
 - Aibonito (1825)
 - Salinas (1841)
 - Santa Isabel (1842)
- Arecibo (1616)
 - Utuado (1739)
 - Adjuntas (1815)
 - Jayuya (1911)
 - Vega Alta (1775)
 - Vega Baja (1776)
 - Camuy – La Tuna (1807)
 - Isabela (1819)
 - Quebradillas (1823)
 - Hatillo (1823)
- Hato Grande de los Delgado (1626)
 - Las Piedras (1773)
 - Caguas (1775)
 - Juncos (1797)
 - San Lorenzo (1811)
 - Gurabo (1815)
 - Aguas Buenas (1838)
- Ponce (1692)
- Loiza (1719)
 - Canovanas (1910)
- Humacao (1722)
- Guayama (1736)
 - Maunabo (1799)
 - Patillas (1811)
 - Arroyo (1855)
- Manati (1738)
 - Barranquitas (1803)
 - Orocovis - Barros (1825)
 - Comerio (1826)
 - Morovis (1818)
 - Orocovis (1825)
 - Ciales (1820)
 - Barceloneta (1881)
 - Florida (1971)
- Aguada (1739)
 - San Sebastian del Pepino (1752)
 - Lares (1827)
 - Las Marias (1871)
 - Rincon (1771)
 - Moca (1772)
 - Aguadilla (1775)
- Toa Baja (1745)
 - Dorado (1842)
- Toa Alta (1751)
 - Corozal (1804)
 - Naranjito (1824)
- Fajardo (1772)
 - Ceiba (1838)
- Cayey (1773)
 - Cidra (1809)
 - Comerio (1826)
- Yabucoa (1793)
- Luquillo (1797)
- Juana Diaz (1798)
 - Villalba (1917)
- Trujillo
 - Trujillo Alto (1801)
 - Carolina (1857)
- Vieques (1811)
- Naguabo (1821)
- Rio Grande (1840)
- Culebra (1880)