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The tiny Spanish village of Castrillo Matajudios, whose second name means "Kill Jews", will hold a referendum next month to decide if it should change the name that offends outsiders and embarrasses some residents, its mayor said on Tuesday.

The village's 56 registered voters will be asked on May 25 whether they want to keep the name or change it to the similar but non-offensive name the town once had, Mayor Lorenzo Rodriguez Perez said.

Historical studies show the town's original name was Castrillo Motajudios. The second name of that translates to "Jews Hill" and dates back to 1035 when 66 Jews were killed in a nearby town and those expelled settled on the hill.

The earliest records found with the name changed to "Kill Jews" is from 1627, more than a century after the 1492 edict by Spain's royalty that required Jews to leave the country, convert to Catholicism or face being burned at the stake during the Spanish Inquisition.

Although Jews were killed in the area, researchers believe the town got its current name from Jewish residents who converted to Catholicism and wanted to convince Spaniards they opposed Jews, Rodriguez said. Others think it might have simply come from a slip of the pen.

The idea of a referendum grew from moves to document Castrillo Matajudios' Jewish past and attract tourists.

"There are always the stories of people from here traveling to Israel with a passport that says Matajudios and wishing they didn't have to show it," Rodriguez said.

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