



Board of Directors 2013-2014

President Mary Torres
 V-President Toni Garza
 Secretary Irene Silva
 Treasurer Annie Barrera
 Board Members
 Carlos Cantu
 Hilda Flores
 John Ramirez
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 Ofelia Olsson

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RIO GRANDE VALLEY HISPANIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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President's Message

Welcome to a new year of family history research! I'm honored to have been elected as president of this highly successful genealogical society for 2013—2014. This honor brings with it a responsibility and commitment to continue operating under the standards of excellence set by the society's organizers while implementing new projects to insure the society's sustainability and growth. With your support, we can look forward to a very busy, exciting and productive year.

Mary Torres

Books for Sale

Books for Sale

Cameron County Marriages—Grooms
 1848—1943, A-L, \$40.00 +Shipping
 Cameron County Marriages—Grooms,
 1848-1943, M-Z, \$40.00 + Shipping
 Cameron County Marriages—Brides
 1848-1943, A-L, \$40.00 + Shipping
 Cameron County Marriages—Brides
 1848-1943, M-Z, \$40.00 + Shipping
 Mas Antes—a book of family stories, \$40 + shipping
 El Soliseño Cemetery— \$10 + shipping
 (complimentary dvd of present day
 El Soliseño included)
 San Fernando, Tamaulipas, MX, Baptisms, 1856
 (visit our website for order form or call Annie at 956-
 454-9419)
www.rgvhispanicgenealogicalsociety.com

A Message from President of the Battle of Medina Society

I am happy to report that the Texan Battle of Medina was a tremendous success. Film maker Bill Millet was on site to record the event for the documentary "Texas before the Alamo," which is scheduled to air in April. I have also been traveling with Mr. Millet to visit and film episodes for the upcoming production. I have posted pictures of the Battle of Medina reenactment on my Facebook page. I am also working with the MACC to have it premier on May 4, 2013, here in Austin.

The 200th anniversary of the First Constitutional Government of Texas will be celebrated in San Antonio at the Spanish Governors Palace on April 6, 2013 at 10 A M. There will be authors and historians speaking on this very important Texan historical event. Plans are also being made for the reenactment of the 200th anniversary of the Texan Battle of Medina at the High School in Losoya, Texas.

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RGV HGS Installs New Officers and Board Members

“All the officers are eager to begin their new leadership roles.”



L to R: Carlos Cantu, John Ramirez, Hilda Flores, Annie Barrera, Irene Silva, Mr. Joey Treviño, Toni Garza, Mary Torres, Ofelia Olsson

New Board Members

The Society elected new officers in October and recently had its installation of officers. The new board will be led by Mary Torres, a long time genealogist with able assistance by Toni Garza, the new vice-president. Irene and Annie will continue in their respective roles of Secretary and Treasurer. All the officers are eager to begin their new leadership roles.

Meeting Dates



Clemente Rendon

January 20—Leti de la Vega

February 17— Charles Fisk
(Picture Domino)- Bring your lap-tops loaded with Picture Domino

March 17—Clemente Rendon

Future sites for the Historical Conferences

- 2013 Victoria
- 2014 McAllen/Edinburg (Las Porciones)
- 2015 Laredo
- 2016 Corpus Christi
- 2017 Austin
- 2018 San Antonio
- 2019 Dallas
- 2020 Houston
- 2021 Rio Grande Valley Hispanic Genealogical Society

Yolanda Gonzalez Gomez, a friend



Yolanda Gonzalez Gomez was a wonderful friend to the Rio Grande Valley Hispanic Genealogical Society. When first contacted by members of our society, she jumped right in and started helping us with ideas for researching and fundraising. She helped some of us with histories of the area, recommended reading material, and, of course, genealogy. Yolanda, I felt, was a great motivational speaker and we loved speaking with her. We are in the midst of indexing some of the material that she lent us for this purpose. We will miss her.

“ She helped some of us with histories of the area, recommended reading material, and of course, genealogy.”

Google Tip

When you're looking for someone, you might want to keep first and last name together, rather than getting results for either name. You do this by using quotes. If you want results in a specific area you use the word 'intext'. For example

If I'm looking for Sabas Medrano and I want results from genealogical documents in Cameron County, I write Sabas Medrano in quotes followed by a tilde followed by the word 'genealogy' followed by the word 'intext' followed by a colon (no space) followed by 'Cameron County. For example:

"Sabas Medrano" ~ genealogy intext:Cameron County

Research Tip

I was disappointed that my parents and older siblings were not in the 1940 census. At the time, they lived in a small house located far back of my grandfather's house in a farming community. I am not old enough yet to appear in that census but I realized that I could create my own census record for the information that I do know. I downloaded a blank census form for this purpose. Don't forget to record information about yourself for future generations. Don't limit it to census information.

“My parents and older siblings did not appear in the 1940 Census”

Expressions

In the past, personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread bee's wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told, 'mind your own bee's wax.' Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term 'crack a smile.' In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt...Therefore, the expression 'losing face.'

Queries

My grandmother, Tomasita Barrera, 29 Dec 1889-18 Apr 1965) was born in or near Cerralvo, Nuevo Leon. She left Cerralvo at about age 16 to go to Gunnison, Colorado, to work in the mines as a cook. I cannot find any records until 1920 census where I found her married to my grandfather. Her siblings were Roque, Raymond and at least one sister, Petra, who lived in Cerralvo and in Brownsville. I cannot find any information that can connect me to any of her family. I had understood her mother's name was "Labrada Gonzales" but do not know for sure. Can anyone help me?
*Refer to MH when responding to this query.
orolsson@rgv.rr.com



1940 Census

The 1940's Census recently became available for researchers. It's important to know what's on the census. The 1940 census has the address; home owned or rented; value or monthly rental; whether on a farm; name; relationship to household head; sex; race; age; marital status; school attendance; educational attain-

ment ; birthplace; citizenship of foreign born; location of residence years ago, and whether on a farm; employment status;; if at work,, whether in private or nonemergency government work, or in public emergency work (WPA, CCC, NYA, etc.); if in private or nonemergency government work, hours worked in week; if seeking work or on pub-

lic emergency work, duration of unemployment; occupation, industry and class of worker; weeks worked last year; income last year.

To download a 1940 blank census form, go to www.familytreemagazine.com

I searched in Fold3.com and was able to get a copy of the service record.

Researching in Ancestry.com

U. S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861—1865 about Juan Medrano

Name: Juan Medrano

Side: Confederate

Regiment
State/Origin: Texas

Regiment Name: Capt. Trevino's Squad Texas Partisan Mounted Volunteers

Regiment Name Expanded: Trevino's Squadron, Partisan Mounted Volunteers, Texas Cavalry

Rank In: Private

Rank In Expanded: Private

Rank Out: Private

Rank Out Expanded: Private

This is an example of what you can find in Ancestry.com. After I found this, I searched in Fold3.com and was able to get a copy of the service record.. Juan Medrano was Sabas Medrano's brother.

MORE THAN AN EXPEDITION by José A. López

Just over 200 years ago, a town priest in Central Mexico decided to bring justice for all in Mexico, including Texas, its northern province.

On September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo voiced his “Grito de Dolores.” While his exact words are unknown, the message he gave to the people of Mexico was clear. To end suffering and despair, he wanted to rid Mexico of bad government. Thus, Father Hidalgo meant to do away with harsh colonial laws adversely affecting Creoles, mestizos, and poor peasants.

Meanwhile in Revilla, Nuevo Santander (now present-day Guerrero, Tamaulipas, right across the Rio Grande from Zapata, Texas), Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara answered the call. The young merchant rode out in search of Father Hidalgo to volunteer his services. Impressed by Don Bernardo’s demeanor, Father Hidalgo’s general staff commissioned him a lieutenant colonel in the Mexican Revolutionary Army.

This initial freedom fervor sprouting from José de Escandón’s Villas del Norte on the banks of the lower Rio Grande and later organized in Natchitoches, Louisiana, is known in history books as the Gutiérrez–McGee Expedition. Simply because it doesn’t fit the Sam Houston model, historians record it as a filibuster, rather than as the First Texas Revolution, an honor it truly deserves. However, I’m getting ahead of myself. So, let me continue with the story.

How did Don Bernardo’s involvement in Mexico’s independence affect Texas? First, let’s remember one key fact. Though many people find it hard to understand, Texas was part of Mexico at the time. Second, our hero’s goal was to establish Texas as an independent province of Mexico. As such, Don Bernardo was named the Commander, Army of the North; an army existing only on paper. Don Bernardo was expected to organize it from scratch. It was a challenge he readily accepted. Don Bernardo began recruiting soldiers from Revilla; making the Revillense patriots the seeds of the Army of the North (First Texas Army).

Alas, Father Miguel Hidalgo’s large army of poorly equipped peasants was no match for the superior Spanish Army. The rebels were soon defeated on January 17, 1811 at the Battle of Calderón Bridge near Guadalajara, Jalisco. Father Hidalgo and members of his senior staff were soon captured and later executed on July 30, 1811. Upon hearing of Father Hidalgo’s death, Don Bernardo and his cadre of fourteen volunteers took off from Revilla toward the U.S. to seek help. The struggle for Mexico’s independence may have suffered a major set-back, but the fight for autonomy for the Province (State) of Texas would continue.

After surviving an ambush by Spanish forces near the Texas–Louisiana border, Don Bernardo left his wounded troops in Louisiana to recover. With three companions, he set off again. Even though, the three men soon decided to return to Louisiana. Undeterred, Don Bernardo finally arrived in Washington, D.C. on a very cold December 11, 1811. Hence, as Mexico’s first Ambassador to the U.S., he became the first vaquero (cowboy) to visit the capital and the White House. Later, when the English-speaking citizens in the U.S. tried to pronounce the word “vaquero”, it sounded like “buckaroo.” (That’s how this charming word was invented.)

With the blessing of President James Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe, Don Bernardo organized the Army of the North (First Texas Army) in Natchitoches, Louisiana. He then led the first Texas Revolution.

(continued on next page)



José A. López

“Later, when the English-speaking citizens in the U.S. tried to pronounce the word ‘vaquero’, it sounded like ‘buckaroo.’”

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A STATUE OF BERNARDO GUTIÉRREZ DE LARA HAS BEEN ERECTED IN HOMETOWN OF CIUDAD GUERRERO, ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE FROM ZAPATA, TEXAS.

José Antonio (Joe) López was born and raised in Laredo, Texas, and is a USAF Veteran. He now lives in Universal City, Texas. He is the author of two books: "The Last Knight (Don Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara Uribe, A Texas Hero)," and "Nights of Wailing, Days of Pain (Life in 1920s South Texas)." Lopez is also the founder of the Tejano Learning Center, LLC, and www.tejanosunidos.org, a Web site dedicated to Spanish Mexican and events in U.S. history that are mostly overlooked in mainstream history books.

(More Than An Expedition— con'd)

Just like George Washington's troops, Don Bernardo's army was poorly equipped. However, possessing enormous bravery, they crossed the Sabine River into Texas in 1812. Starting their revolution at the Battle of Nacogdoches, the rebel army of Tejanos, U.S. Anglo volunteers, and Native American allies defeated the Spanish Army in five battles. On April 1–2, 1813, Don Bernardo and the Army of the North took over San Antonio and the Presidio of the Alamo. (Yes, in this first battle of the Alamo, the Texans won!) In truth, Tejanos did significant heavy lifting, sacrificing, and dying for liberty and justice for all in Texas.

Don Bernardo was a man of his word. As he had promised, he wrote and then signed the first Texas Declaration of Independence. On April 6, 1813, he read its contents to jubilant Bexareños gathered outside the Spanish Governors Palace. Likewise, on April 17, 1813, he signed the first Texas Constitution, (Constitución del Primer Estado Independiente de Texas, República Mexicana, San Fernando, Abril 17, 1813). (For safe-keeping, the first Texas Constitution was carried to the U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.)

Unfortunately, Don Bernardo was forced to resign his position of leadership and went into exile in Louisiana. Under a different commander, the Army of the North was soundly defeated by the Spanish Army on August 18, 1813 at the Battle of Medina. Over 800 Tejano citizens from the Bexar area died for the cause of freedom. Over 300 rebel supporters in San Antonio were later killed as well. The Texas State Historical Commission calls the Battle of Medina the largest battle ever fought on Texas soil. The defeat marked the end of the first Independent Texas.

Don Bernardo's rebellion, capped by the first Texas Declaration of Independence and Constitution, has all the makings of Texas' genuine first revolution for freedom. Sadly, in 1835–36 Anglo immigrants from the U.S. began arriving in greater numbers. They first joined Tejanos fighting for a federalist type of government in Mexico. Soon, the Anglos shifted gears and in 1836 under Sam Houston opted for total independence from Mexico. (Curiously, the Anglos in Texas then traded their independence nine years later to join the U.S. as a slave state.)

Suddenly, 1836 became Ground Zero for Texas Independence. The freedom road beginning on September 16, 1810 was ignored, as was the taste of liberty Don Bernardo had given Texas citizens on April 6, 1813.

Ironically, while Anglos in Texas celebrated their independence from Mexico, Black citizens lost theirs. The reason is that under Mexican law in Texas, Blacks were free men and women. After 1836, they were once again enslaved and were not freed until after the Civil War ended in 1865. Suffice to say that up to now most, but certainly not all, historians by and large diminish Don Bernardo's heroic deeds. Moreover, their deliberate depiction of Don Bernardo as merely an adventurer lessens his role as a brilliant, charismatic military leader. He continues to inspire his large family of descendants throughout Texas, especially South Texas, and the Villas del Norte on both sides of the Rio Grande, as well as his many non-Spanish Mexican-descent admirers.

In summary, the point of my article is this. The 200th Anniversary of the signing of the first Texas Constitution is fast approaching (April 17, 2013). I ask that mainstream historians on that date begin to refer to the Gutiérrez-McGee Expedition as the First Texas Revolution. It has the documentary credentials to prove it. The Tejano Monument in Austin already recognizes the true roots of this great place we call Texas. As such, it's time to record Texas history in a seamless manner from its discovery in 1519 to the present. In the words of Dr. Lino Garcia, Jr., Professor Emeritus, UTPA, "Exigimos solamente lo que merecemos" (We seek only what we deserve.)