Canary Islands Descendants Association

First Cabildo Celebration
Canary Islands Descendants Celebrate First Civil Government in Texas

Canary Islanders established first model of municipal government

On August 1, 1731, our ancestors by order of Viceroy Casafuerte with authority from the King of Spain, Felipe V established the first civil government in Texas. The Viceroy directed: This dispatch likewise shall instruct the aforesaid governor to select six men, from among the heads of these fifteen families, to serve as councilmen (regidores) one as chief constable (alguacil mayor) one as secretary and notary public (escribano de consejo y publico), and one as manager of the property and funds of this commonwealth (mayordomo de los bienes y propios). This form of municipal government is still the model for many municipalities throughout the state of Texas. Join us in celebrating this historic event on Saturday, August 4, 2012.

See page 3 for details

CALENDAR

July 15 2012, Membership Meeting is Cancelled

August 4, 2012
First Civil Government Celebration

Sept. 16, 2012-2:30 PM
Membership Meeting, AT&T Community Centre at San Fernando Cathedral, 194 W. Commerce St., San Antonio, TX.

Oct. 21, 2012-2:30 PM
Nominating Committee
Membership Meeting, AT&T Community Centre at San Fernando Cathedral, 194 W. Commerce St., San Antonio, TX.

Nov. 18, 2012-2:30 PM
Officer Elections
Membership Meeting, AT&T Community Centre at San Fernando Cathedral, 194 W. Commerce St., San Antonio, TX.

Our 2nd Vice-President Dorothy Perez forwarded this information. It highlights recent events of our reconnection to the Canary Islands.
Clave: somosprimos
Dear Mimi Lozano of “Somos Primos”

I am writing to you following a letter from Rueben Perez of San Antonio who sent you some information and photos from the Canary Island of Lanzarote. I believe he wants me to explain our role in all this. So here goes:
In 1985 I and my wife Liz started the first English-language tourist magazine on Lanzarote for a locally-owned Spanish weekly publication called “Lancelot”. From the very beginning, besides a comprehensive description of the island’s tourist attractions etc. we always included items about local culture, history and traditions.

In 1994 a (Spanish-language) book was published called The Foundation of San Antonio Texas by Canary Islanders in 1731 which described the names and details of the 56 Canary Islanders who had emigrated. According to this highly interesting work 44 of the 56 Founders were from this island of Lanzarote. See Reconnection continued on Page 4

We Were There!!! Canary Islands Descendants at the Tejano Parade.
From left-Socorro Morales, Agnes Chapa, Tejano Monument Artist - Armando Hinojosa, Lounell Benford, Eric Benavides, Alice Cabrera and JJ Zavala at the Tejano Monument Parade.

Celebrating 281 Years in Texas
July 2012
Canary Islands Descendants Association

Purpose
A. To encourage and promote all educational studies and historical and genealogical research that enhance the historical, cultural and civic significance of the accomplishments of the sixteen original Canary Islands families who founded the Villa de san Fernando, now the City of San Antonio.
B. To foster and perpetuate the preservation of documents and artifacts identified with the culture and life of the Canary Islanders’ history in San Antonio, Texas.
C. To initiate, and promote programs, lectures and civic events which are intended for the general public, and which are conducted to memorialize historical sites and buildings associated with the Canary Islanders’ history in San Antonio, such as San Fernando Cathedral.
D. To establish and promote the celebration of significant days and commemorative civic events that celebrate those special days linked to the Canary Islanders’ history in San Antonio for example: February 2-Feast day of La Virgen de la Candelaria, Patroness of the Canary Islands; March 9-Commemoration of the day the 16 families arrived at the Presidio San Antonio de Bejar; and August 1-Commemoration of the establishment of the first civil government in 1731.
E. To remain non-political in structure and activity, yet a viable civic entity.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!

We welcome you to the organization and hope to see you at the First Civil Government Events. Bienvenidos!!

LIFE’S JOURNEYS
IN MEMORIAM:
Leonard Jaimes, former President, Canary Islands Descendants Association, passed away November 2011
Yolanda Garcia McKinney, Member, mother of Letitia Riley, passed away December 2011
Antonio Perez, Honorary Member from the Canary Islands, passed away
Margaret Lou Hensley, Daughter of Judge and Mrs. Thonhoff, passed away on April 25, 2012
Lydia Leuszler passed away on January 25, 2012
Eugene Serrano Chapa, father of Gene A. Chapa passed away May 12, 2012
Steve Graham Saldana, Canary Islands Descendant, passed away July 5, 2012

Our deepest sympathy go out to our members and their families.

Membership Meeting Scheduled for July 15th is cancelled
Next Membership Meeting Scheduled Sunday September 16, 2012

CIDA items are available
The Canary Islands Descendants Association has medals, throws, pins and other items. These items can be mailed to you. For item prices and shipping information contact First Vice-President Armandina Sifuentes at 210-524-9252 or e-mail her at dinagsif@att.net.

Newsletter Contributions Needed
This newsletter will be published each month that a membership meeting is held. This is your newsletter, please submit any articles, items that pertain to the Canary Islanders that would be of interest to the membership. It has been suggested that each of the sixteen families should be featured in the newsletter. If you want to share what started you on your genealogical quest, or any interesting information, documents about your Canary Islands families, please contact Gene A. Chapa at geneC1731@att.net or at 512-445-9685. All submissions are appreciated.
Notice to Members

Dear Members,

Our organization is at a critical juncture. Officer elections are coming up in November of this year. Serving as an Officer requires dedication, time, and passion for our Ancestors. We thank our current Officers for their dedication, and passion for this organization. Some of the current officers have indicated that they will not consider re-election. For this reason it is important that our members step up to assume the officer roles if this organization is to remain viable. Other considerations are to have quarterly membership meetings. We the Officers ask you to come to the Cabildo event with ideas on how to ensure the success of the organization.

Sincerely,

Executive Board
Reconnection
(continued from Page 1)

Not only that, but that the leader of the emigrants, Juan Leal Gorraz who was appointed the first Mayor in the history of San Antonio, had previously been the head of the Lanzarote Island Council at Teguise, the capital of the Island at the time.

I phoned the author of the book, Antonio Curbelo Fuentes, a Canarian historian from Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, and asked him if he had come across anybody in San Antonio whose ancestors were from Lanzarote. He said that he had spent most of his time in Texas scrutinizing documents in the Records Office in Austin, and did not have details of the present day descendents although he had been told that there was some kind of an organisation they belonged to. I called the US Embassy and Consulate General in Madrid as well as the Chamber of Commerce in San Antonio and even the Yellow Pages but without any luck. (This was pre-Google).

In 1997, I got a phone call from a friend who worked as a tourist guide. He told me that an American wearing a San Antonio T-shirt approached him to ask if he knew of any connection between Lanzarote and San Antonio. My friend told him that he knew an English journalist (myself) who could probably answer his question and he would have a reply by tomorrow but the San Antonian told him that he was a passenger on a cruise ship sailing to all the Canary Islands which was leaving the island that same day. He told the guide that on his return home he would mail him some books and other documentation to pass on to me.

By now it was 1997. A few weeks later his parcel arrived and I searched through the contents. Suddenly I spotted a photocopy of an invitation which read:

“We are celebrating the arrival of our ancestors from the Canary Islands in 1730 with a mass at San Fernando Cathedral on 9 March followed by a luncheon at the Menger Hotel. If you with to attend, please send a cheque for $15 to Dorothy Perez, President Canary Islands Descendents Association (CIDA), San Antonio, Texas, plus her address.”

I immediately wrote a letter to Dorothy Perez, enclosing a copy of the current issue of our magazine, asking whether any of her members were of Lanzarote descent as we would be interested in writing an article. I can still clearly remember her reply:

“When I received your letter, sunshine entered my life, I myself am a descendent of Juan Curbelo and Juan Delgado, who had been members of the Island Council of Lanzarote who joined the group of emigrants headed by Juan Leal Gorraz. This is the first contact for any member of my family with the island of Lanzarote since their departure in 1730, close to 268 years ago!”

After a three year search: EUREKA!

I then called The Mayor of Teguise, Juan Pedro Hernandez, and gave him the good news and he told me to extend an invitation to Dorothy to come to Lanzarote as quickly as possible as a guest of Teguise Town Hall. When Dorothy paid her first visit to the Island she was received by the President of the Lanzarote Island Council (Cabildo) who presented her with a traditional outfit among other gifts and The Mayor of Teguise gave her a silk flag bearing the emblem of the Town of Teguise among other items.

Dorothy supplied us with a large amount of historical information which I was able to use in a comprehensive article about the story of San Antonio from 1730 to the present day which is now posted on the CIDA website. We have since become very close friends – family in fact – and more recently joined by Rueben.

I then called The Mayor of Teguise, Juan Pedro Hernandez Delgado, Town Historian of Teguise and Maria Dolores Rodriguez, Archivist of the Public Records Office who first introduced us to the subject of San Antonio and have since provided all the Descendents who have visited Lanzarote with copies of documentation of their families dating back to the 1730s and before. My wife Liz and I have worked in close harmony with these two dedicated people our friends for almost 20 years now.

In San Antonio permit me to add the name of the late John Leal, formerly of Bexar Archives who also supplied us with a wealth of historical material. And, Dr Alfonso Chiscano who provided links between this and the other Canary Islands with San Antonio at the highest levels of government and a member of his organisation, Patsy Dill Moss.

We are proud to say that we are all close friends.

“Somos Primos”It’s a pleasure meeting you Mimi and I hope the above answers some of your questions. Our door is always open if you have any more queries.

Very best wishes,

Larry and Liz
Lancelot “English Edition”
We Were There!!!

Canary Islands Descendants March in Parade honoring Tejano Monument

Let it be said that the Canary Islands Descendants were there!! Early on the morning of Saturday, March 31, 2012, dedicated Canary Islands Descendants showed up to honor their Ancestors, by marching in the Nosotros Los Tejanos Parade for the dedication of the Tejano Monument on the Texas State Capitol grounds. This historic event honored all Texans of hispanic descent. (for more information visit www.nosotroslostejanos.com)

The descendants that proudly marched in this event were: CIDA Secretary-Socorro Morales and her Uncle, CIDA Property Custodian-JJ Zavala, his wife Diana, Lounell Benford, Agnes Chapa, Alice Cabrera and her husband Pete, Cindy Benavides (3rd VP Armandina Sifuente’s daughter), her husband and son Eric Benavides and CIDA President-Gene A. Chapa.

The goal of the Tejano Monument committee as stated in their own words was to: To enplace a monument on the Texas Capitol grounds to establish an enduring legacy that acknowledges and pays tribute to the contributions by Tejanos as permanent testimony of the Spanish-Mexican heritage that has influenced and is inherent in present-day Texas culture.

The monument is one of the largest on the Capitol grounds and sits on the southeast corner of the Capitol grounds. Every descendant of Spanish and Mexican descent will be filled with pride when they see it. When you are in Austin be sure to make a trip to the Capitol grounds to see it.

Of special interest to us the Canary Islands Descendants, is one of the five plaques on the monument that describes the contributions of Tejanos. The first plaque reads:

Spanish Tejanos 1519-1810,

Tejanos are descended from the Spanish explorers and colonizers who settled Texas. They eventually took the name Tejano from the Spanish word Tejas, used by the native American Indians who originally inhabited Texas. As early as 1519 Spaniards visited the Texas coast and a group led by Alvar Nunex Cabeza de Vaca was the first to describe the native peoples of Texas and the geography of Texas between 1518 and 1534. The Texas Panhandle region was explored by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1541, while the DeSoto-Moscoso expedition explored northeastern Texas the following year. Soon Spaniards explored the coastal regions and established Texas as a province.

An attempt by France to establish a colony on the Texas coast in the 1680s prompted Spain to send General Alonzo de Leon in search of the French settlement. On his expeditions into Texas in 1686-1690 De Leon founded the first Spanish mission in East Texas. These early expeditions named most of the major rivers in Texas and released many longhorn cattle which later became the foundation of the cattle industry in Texas. By 1718, a permanent community at San Antonio de Bexar had been established by soldier-settlers and Franciscan missionaries, later expanded by families from New Spain and the Canary Islands.

By the mid-1700s, Spanish settlements included the capital at Los Adaes (now Robeline, Louisiana), San Antonio and La Bahia (now Goliad). In the lower Rio Grande country, other settlers from the interior of Mexico and Spain, under the leadership of Jose de Escandon, founded a network of towns. Tejano ranchers provided thousands of longhorn cattle to Spanish soldiers and settlers and even drove cattle northeastward to aid the American Revolution. Tejano pioneers left a proud ranching legacy in Texas.
Annual Dues
Members: $25.00
Associate Members: $15.00
Dues should be mailed to our treasurer:
Mrs. Estela Quintero
3735 Sunshine Ranch Rd.
San Antonio, TX 78228-2510
Thank you if you have already paid your dues.
Pass this information on to inactive Members.

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS
Please mail postal and e-mail address corrections/updates to:
Mrs. Armandina Sifuentes
207 Shady Rill
San Antonio, TX 78213-2927
or
e-mail: dinagsif@att.net

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