



# LA GRANADA



The Order of Granaderos y Damas de Gálvez – Founding Chapter

MAY 2013

[www.granaderos.org](http://www.granaderos.org)

SAN ANTONIO, TX

## The Churchill Papers

In 1903, Theodore John Dimitry was accepted into the Louisiana Society Sons of the American Revolution (LASSAR) based on his ancestor, a Greek immigrant named Michael Dracos (Dragon), who served as an officer under General Bernardo de Gálvez. Dimitry had his great grandfather's official papers including his original commission signed by the King of Spain.

Dimitry began searching for more records of men who fought under Gálvez with the intent of creating opportunities for their descendants to qualify for membership into the SAR. However, his efforts ended with his death in 1904.

In 1916, Charles Robert Churchill became President of LASSAR and in 1917, he picked up where Dimitry left off in his search for records of men who fought under Gálvez. The round-about search is a fascinating story involving a 16-year-old girl touring Mexico with money sewn into her dress, people moving to other countries due to the outbreak of World War I and a chance meeting between two American ladies who just happened to be working at the American Consulate in Spain at the same time. This story appears on pages 3 and 4 of this newsletter. All of this resulted in Churchill obtaining the records he needed.

In 1925, Churchill published his book, *SAR Spanish Records, Spanish-English War, 1779-1783 Men under Gen. Don Bernardo de Galvez and other records from the Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain*. Churchill's exhaustive research is evident in his book, which contains the names of troops who served under Gálvez, the names of ships under Gálvez' command, information on his Gulf Coast campaign and even translated correspondence to and from Gálvez. Churchill's book has been used by numerous people to join the SAR and DAR using a Gálvez Patriot.

The LASSAR has uploaded the Churchill Papers to their website which can be found at <http://www.lassar.org.becoming-a-member.html>. It was uploaded in six parts due to its size.

The San Antonio Chapter of Granaderos y Damas de Gálvez has obtained a copy of the Churchill Papers through Granadero Clifford Normand in Baton Rouge. The book will be donated to a local library.



## "Texas Before The Alamo" – World Premier

The documentary film "*Texas Before The Alamo*" will premier at an event on May 4, 2013 at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican-American Cultural Center in Austin. The event is from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm and is free on a first come, first served basis. Filmed at historic locations in Texas and Mexico, it explains the founding of Texas and the establishment of El Camino Real de los Tejas, Goliad and the missions of San Antonio. The film will be broadcast on PBS in the Fall of 2013. The contact person for the event is Dan Arellano at 512-826-7569 or [darellano@austin.rr.com](mailto:darellano@austin.rr.com).



## Our Next Meeting:

**Wednesday, May 1st**

**Royal Inn Oriental Cuisine**

**5440 Babcock Rd**

**(Corner of Babcock & Hamilton Wolfe)**

**Dinner at 6:30**

**Meeting at 7:00**

### Guest Speaker:

**Dr. Marian Martinello**

**"The Search For Pedro's Story"**

## Treasurer's Report

March 1-31, 2013

Submitted by Treasurer Olga Lizcano

PREVIOUS BALANCE: 4,581.17

### DEPOSITS:

Sale of Vela Book	20.00
Sale of Thonhoff Book	15.00
Sale of Blazon to J.Perez	25.00
Total Deposits	<u>60.00</u>

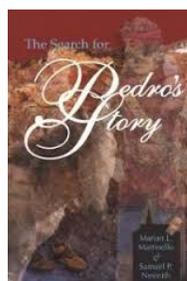
### EXPENSES:

Reimbursed Joe Perez for purch of 2 fifes and 10 pcs of eight	<u>65.00</u>
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NEW BALANCE: 4,576.17

# The Search For Pedro's Story

Dr. Marian Martinello's *The Search For Pedro's Story* is an alluring book written in a style that draws the reader into the historical and personal life of Pedro Péres and leads the reader on Pedro's journey through life, from a 17-year-old boy filled with wonder through his career as a soldado de cuera (leather jacketed soldier).



It tells us what was likely in the mind, heart and dreams of Pedro, an actual person in history who served at the Presidio San Antonio de Béjar. Each chapter has an intriguing three-part format consisting of a Signpost (artifact), The Search (the author's inquiry and research) and Pedro's Story (imaginative scenarios of Pedro's daily life). It so eloquently intertwines fact and fiction into an absorbing story of a presidio soldier of another time that we come to know and care about as he goes through the same challenges and joys in life that we all experience.

The reader is pulled into Pedro's story through historical relics that were important in his lifetime. Research and inquiry into those actual relics inspires creative fictional situations that make up Pedro's story. While the story covers Pedro's lifetime, the issues he faces are timeless.

Copies of the book will be available for purchase at our meeting next week for \$19.43 including tax. Cash, credit cards or checks made payable to Barnes & Noble will be accepted. You will find this to be a fascinating book blending historical facts with an imaginative story.

## **Granaderos y Damas de Gálvez – Founding Chapter – San Antonio TX**

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# How The Troops of Gálvez Became Accepted in the SAR

Condensed from an article by Tom Jacks (Member of the Louisiana SAR)

Each year, dozens of men and women join the SAR and DAR on the records of their Louisiana ancestors who fought the British under the Spanish flag with Gálvez. Few fully appreciate the definitive role that the Louisiana Society SAR played in discovering and recognizing these ancestors.

When the Sons of the American Revolution was founded in 1889, the definition of “Patriot” was limited to colonists who were engaged from Lexington to Yorktown—the conventional and traditional definition. No thought was given to the French soldiers and sailors under de Grasse and Rochambeau who fought at Yorktown, much less to those Spanish subjects fighting under Gálvez on the Gulf Coast.

All of this was changed by an unlikely visit. Shortly after his inauguration for his second term in 1901, President William McKinley planned a visit to the American West. Along the route of the Presidential Train, many stops were planned including a three-hour visit to New Orleans. It was President McKinley’s custom to ask local members of Patriotic Societies to serve as his escort during visits. Usually, local members of the Grand Army of the Republic or the Military Order of the Loyal Legion—former soldiers and officers of the Union Army with whom McKinley had fought in the Civil War—were asked. Despite the fact that there were no less than three GAR Camps in New Orleans at the time, McKinley exercised a bit of sectional magnanimity, and asked the local Sons of the American Revolution to escort him during his visit.

This bit of publicity had an amazing effect and interest in SAR membership soared in New Orleans. At least one man challenged the rules to SAR admittance. Theodore John Dimitry was born in 1839 in New Orleans. His ancestors were Greek immigrants to New Orleans during the Spanish rule. His great-grandfather—Michael Dracos—was an officer under Gálvez who fought in all the major campaigns from Manchac to Pensacola. Dimitry owned many of his great-grandfather’s papers, including his original commission signed by the King of Spain.



Michael (Dracos) Dragon  
Picture courtesy of the  
Louisiana State Museum

John Dimitry—encouraged by members of the Louisiana Society—carefully prepared his membership application. His application was submitted to the Secretary-General of the SAR, A. Howard Clark of the Smithsonian Institution, in mid-December 1902.

Clark passed the interesting documents around to colleagues at the Smithsonian. All agreed—the Spanish Louisianans were Patriots. Clark prepared a report to the Executive Committee recommending acceptance of these patriots. At their next meeting, in New York City in 1903, they accepted this report and Dimitry was admitted to membership. The Spanish patriots of Louisiana were now qualifying ancestors!

John Dimitry was immediately made Historian of the Louisiana Society. His mission was to locate the records of all the men who fought with Gálvez. How many other men could join if records were only available?

Dimitry searched all the archives in New Orleans—the church archives at the Cathedral, the Notarial Archives, the records of the State Historical Association... nothing was found. His search then focused on the cathedral in Havana, but his quest ended with his death in 1904.

In 1916, a relatively new member—Charles Robert Churchill—agreed to become President of the Louisiana Society SAR. Robert Churchill was born in 1867. Robert was the very first Electrical Engineering graduate from Tulane. Churchill quickly focused on the same issue Dimitry had over ten years earlier—where were those records? They were not in New Orleans and Churchill learned pretty soon—they were not in Havana. Officials in Cuba pointed him to the General Archives of the Indies in Seville, Spain.

The General Archives of the Indies was established by King Charles III in 1785. His goal was to bring all the papers of the Spanish Empire under one roof. When Churchill learned that the papers he was seeking were part of this massive collection in a foreign city, he must have lost heart, as I surely would have.

In 1917, as the United States entered the World War, many job opportunities opened up for women, who were hired to take the place of men fighting in the war. Churchill's long-time secretary took a job as clerk to the U. S. Naval attaché to Spain—stationed in, of all places, Seville. Before she boarded the ship for Spain, Churchill must have reminded her over and over to keep in touch and take a look in the archives.

Once she settled into her job, Churchill's former secretary began asking around about the archives in Seville and actually found a woman in the office who knew a lot about them. That woman—Irene Aloha Wright—would be the key to the entire effort.

Irene Wright was born in Colorado in 1879. After the death of her father in 1895, Irene—then aged 16—determined to tour Mexico by herself. Her mother sewed \$300 in gold coins in the hem of her petticoat. Irene traveled throughout Mexico, taking money from her dress to pay her way. Just before her money ran out, Irene took a job with a Patrician Mexican family teaching English to their children. From this family, she developed a lifelong fascination with the colonial history of Latin America. Upon her return to Colorado, she was sent to finishing school at the Virginia College for Young Ladies in Roanoke. She then enrolled in Stanford University, graduating with a degree in History in 1904.

Upon her graduation, she took her widowed mother with her to Havana where she lived until the outbreak of the World War. In Cuba, Ms. Wright wrote for several English language newspapers and started her own magazine. In 1915, she and her mother moved to Seville, Spain, where she intended to spend a year researching the archives for a planned book. She ended up staying there for over 20 years.

Wright took a job at the American Consulate as the Information Officer and it was there that she met Churchill's former secretary and first learned of Churchill's project. In fact, during the time they worked together during lunch breaks and days off (which surely were few and far between) the two ladies found a few rosters of Gálvez's Louisiana militia and sent them to Churchill.

With the cessation of hostilities in November 1918, the women at the American Consulate found themselves out of work. Churchill's secretary returned to the United States—eventually going to nursing school and later heading the Red Cross in New Orleans. Irene Wright, however, determined to make a living in Seville and offered her services as a researcher in the Archives. One of her first customers was the Louisiana Society Sons of the American Revolution. Over the course of the next few years, she cumulatively logged several months of research time, paid for by the Louisiana Society and by Churchill personally.

Finally by the early 1920s, she conceded to Churchill that she didn't think she would find much more on Gálvez and his men. Churchill carefully compiled and indexed all the research and had carefully had the work typed. The manuscript ran over 500 pages. He had his secretaries type four duplicates. He sent one to the Howard Library at Tulane, one to the NSSAR in Washington, one to the DAR Library and he kept two for himself. To this day, the Churchill manuscript is THE definitive source of proof of Gálvez service.

*(My gratitude goes to Granadero Clifford Normand for providing the material for this article – Editor)*



The first Gálvez Patriot recognized by the SAR was a Greek immigrant to Louisiana named Michael Dragon who served as an officer under General Gálvez. Dragon is buried in St. Louis No. 1 Cemetery in New Orleans, LA. His ancestors are in the process of restoring the tomb. The Louisiana Society of the SAR (LASSAR) is supporting the project. The family hopes to have the tomb completed for a dedication ceremony in July. This will be a fitting tribute to a man who assisted the United States in gaining its freedom.

**Granaderos y Damas de Gálvez Meeting Minutes**  
**For the meeting held April 3, 2013 at La Fonda Restaurant**  
**Submitted by Secretary Briana Perez**

Attendance:

Jack Cowan, Joel Escamilla, Sylvia Escamilla, Frank Galindo, Karla Galindo, Larry Kirkpatrick, Yolanda Kirkpatrick, Manual Lizcano, Olga Lizcano, Rueben Perez, Dorothy Perez, Joe Perez, Melanie Ross, James Salinas, Elizabeth Salinas, Corinne Staacke, Richard Whynot

- Governor Joe Perez opened the meeting at 7:32 pm.
- The Invocation was given by Governor Joe Perez.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Governor General Joel Escamilla.
- Treasurer Olga Lizcano gave the Treasurer's Report. Richard Whynot moved to accept the report as presented and Frank Galindo seconded the motion, which passed.
- Joe presented the Secretary's Report for Secretary Briana Perez.
- Joe welcomed guest Melanie Ross and announced Dorothy Perez as a new member.
- Governor General Joel Escamilla gave a report from the National Order.
- Joe gave an update on the Damas brooches. The vendor will look at an actual brooch to ensure it is produced as accurately as possible.
- Joe mentioned that, with regard to the Churchill Book, we must abide by the original agreement and donate the book to a library. Frank Galindo moved that we donate it to the Bexarenos Library. The motion was seconded by Richard Whynot and it carried.
- Joe announced upcoming events: Tejeda Middle School History Fair on Saturday, April 6 and the King William Fair and Parade on Saturday, April 27.
- Joe announced the need for our chapter to purchase our own PA system for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Patriotic Ceremony and other events instead of having to borrow one from other groups. Joe provided information on systems he has compared and recommended one costing \$357.00. Corinne Staacke moved that we purchase the system and the motion was seconded by Frank Galindo and it carried.
- Granadero Larry Kirkpatrick was our guest speaker and he gave an excellent PowerPoint presentation on "The Three Battles at Béxar in the Year 1813"
- Governor Perez adjourned the meeting at 9:05 pm.

## Happy Birthday

Happy Birthday to Dama Sylvia Sutton who celebrates her birthday on May 17<sup>th</sup> and also to Granadero Robert Hancock who celebrates his birthday on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. We're sending you both happy birthday wishes on your special days.

## Fifth Grader Wins DAR Pennsylvania State History Award

Lincoln Elementary School fifth grader Jose Perez-Zetune won in his grade category for the 2012-2013 American History Essay Contest in Pennsylvania. The contest was sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Society DAR and the Gettysburg Chapter and the topic was "Forgotten patriots who supported the American struggle for independence". Jose wrote about how General Bernardo de Gálvez and his troops defeated the British along the Gulf Coast during the American Revolution. Jose and his parents have been invited to receive his award at the DAR's National Convention in June to be held in Washington, DC.