



Canary Islanders Heritage Society of Louisiana

established 1996

What is the Canary Islanders Heritage Society?

In Fall of 1996 a small group, with support from *Isleños* leaders from St. Bernard, met in Baton Rouge to form a society that would function to preserve the historical and cultural traditions of their ancestors from the Canary Islands who lived in the four Spanish settlements in Louisiana that were established by don Bernardo de Gálvez in the eighteenth century. Three of the settlements were named according to their location: La Villa de Gálvez or Galveztown, was located at the confluence of the Amite River and Bayou Manchac; Barataria, at Barataria Bay; and St. Bernard (San Bernardo) at Terre aux Boeufs. The fourth settlement, Valenzuela, was located west of the Mississippi River along the banks of Bayou Lafourche.

The goals of the Canary Islanders Heritage Society are to promote educational, genealogical, and cultural activities related to the history and heritage of the Canary Islanders who came to Louisiana in the eighteenth century, and to interpret the role of the Canary Islands in the colonization and development of the New World. We also seek to foster cultural exchanges between the Canarian descendants of Louisiana and the people of the Canary Islands.

On becoming a member of CIHS, many persons discover family connections that were previously unknown to them. Cousins meet for the first time and share their genealogy. Others, with French surnames, have come to us after discovering, through genealogical research, that their surname was originally Spanish, not French. We welcome new members, visitors to our meetings, and queries through our e-mail address.

Meetings are held at 11:00 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of the month at the Louisiana State Archives Building on Essen Lane unless otherwise notified. Membership in the Society is only \$15/year. Please join us!

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Do you have ancestors from the Canary Islands? Below is a list of surnames of the Canary Islanders who sailed to Louisiana:

Abreu	Flores	Ortiz
Acosta	Francisco	Padrón
Acevedo	Fuentes	Palao
Aguilar	García	Peña
Alemán, Alleman	Gómez	Perera
Alonso, Alonzo	González,	Pérez
Alvarado,	Gonzales	Pimentel
Albarado	Gordillo	Pino (del Pino)
Alvarez	Guerra	Placencia,
de Armas	Guía	Plaisance
Ártilos	Gutiérrez,	Querido
Ascaño, Escaño	Gutiérrez	Quevedo
Avila	Guzmán, Gusmán	Quintana
Barrios	Henríquez	Ramírez
Barroso	Hernández	Ramos
Bello	Herrera	Ravelo
Benitez	Hidalgo	Reyes
Betancourt	Jorge (George)	Ríos
Bermúdez	Labrador	Rivero
Blanco	León	Rodríguez
Caballero,	López	Rojas
Cavallero	Lorenzo	Romano
Cabrera	Lugo	Romero
Campo	Macías, Masias,	Ruano
Carrera	Massias	Ruiz
Carrillo	Machado	Sanabria
Castillo	Marino	Sánchez
Castro	Marrero	Santana,
Collado	Martel	Santa Ana
Curbelo	Martín	Santos
Corbo, Carbo,	Martínez	Serpas
Cabo, Cavo	Mayor	Silverio, Sevario
Cruz	Medina, Medine	Siverio
Cubas	Melián, Millien	Sosa
Dávila	Melo	Súarez
Delgado	Mendoza	Tilano, Tillano
Díaz, Díez	Mesa	Torres
Domínguez	Molero	Truxillo
Dumpierres	Montesino	Vargas
Durán	Monzón	Vega
Eñeda	Morales	Ventura
Escobar	Navarro	Vera
Espino	Núñez	Verde
Espinoso	Ojeda	Viera
Estévez, Esteves	Orgaz	Ximénez,
Falcón	Orta, Dorta	Jiménez
Fernández	Ortega	Zerpa

Where are the Canary Islands?

The Canary Islands are an archipelago of seven islands, covering 2,808 square miles, and constituting an autonomous region and two provinces of Spain. They are located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of northwest Africa, about a hundred miles west of Morocco. Tenerife, La Palma, La Gomera, and El Hierro islands are part of the Santa Cruz de Tenerife province. Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, and Fuerteventura are part of Las Palmas province. The islands are of volcanic origin and rise to 12,162 feet at Mt. Teide, the highest point in Spain. About 1.6 million people live in the Canaries. With their warm climate and fine beaches, the Canaries are a popular tourist center.



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Who were the Canary Islanders who came to Lower Louisiana in the 18th century?

The history of the Canary Islanders in Spanish Colonial Louisiana began in 1778 when 700 men were recruited to increase the size of the Louisiana Regiment. The Spanish Crown had held Louisiana since 1762, and foresaw the possibility of an invasion by Great Britain.

Spain looked to the Canary Islands for the recruits. They initially tried to get single men, but ultimately settled for married recruits so that they could defend the area and also populate it. These recruits had to be “17 to 36 years old, healthy, without vices, and more than five feet tall”. In fact, recruiters were paid extra for every half-inch their recruits stood over five feet. Though it wasn’t in a written agreement, these men understood that they would be staying in Louisiana permanently.

By the summer of 1779, 352 families and 100 single men had arrived in the Louisiana Territory where Governor Bernardo de Galvez settled them in four locations he considered to be major invasion routes planned by the enemy: Barataria (57), Valenzuela (113), Galveztown (114) and San Bernardo (68).

The married men were formed into militia units led by Galvez in his conquest and occupation of British territory on the lower Mississippi River. By these actions Spain supported the Americans in their revolution against Great Britain, Spain’s historical enemy. At the end of 1783, a total of 2,363 men, women, and children from the Canary Islands had been sent to Colonial Louisiana. Living conditions were difficult in a flat, wet, undeveloped land vastly different from their volcanic homeland.

Over two hundred years have passed since the arrival of the Canary Islanders in Louisiana. Today their Hispanic surnames still abound in Louisiana as well as in other states, and their scattered descendants still treasure the unique heritage of their ancestors from the Canary Islands.

Did you know....

.... the Canary Islands are not named after a bird, but after a dog? (from the Latin word “canis”, which also gives us “canine”) The bird is named after the people of the Canaries....