

Museo Presidio Modelo

Category: Legends and traditions

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Written by Equipo de Producción Nacional

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Here in this former prison, the young revolutionaries who assaulted the [Moncada Barracks](#) on [July 26, 1953](#), among whom were imprisoned before their departure for [Mexico](#) was the leader of the revolutionary movement, [Fidel Castro](#).

It is located in the town [Juan Delio Chacón](#), 4 km east of [Nueva Gerona](#), capital of [Isla de la Juventud \(Cuba\)](#), 4 km west of [Bibijagua beach](#).

In October 1925, Mr. [Marcos Perera](#) and his assistant Ricardo López were appointed Head of the work, who arrived on the Island on the 17th of the same month. They were provided with 6 prisoners from the [Nueva Gerona](#) prison, plus the necessary custodians. With them began the transfer of materials. On October 28, 1925 they brought from [Havana](#) a group of 50 inmates, 25 soldiers and a lieutenant; Thus, the presidial work force increased from different prisons in the country; Skilled civilian labor and the signature of the American Stell Co. were also used.

On February 1, [1926](#), President [Gerardo Machado](#) inaugurated the construction start in an official and symbolic act by signing the act of laying the first stone. At the beginning of 1932 construction was paralyzed due to lack of credit.

It was built to hold ordinary prisoners from 6 months to long years of sentence (only for men). According to the dictator [Gerardo Machado](#), to "clean up" the Cuban crime society. Here the 24 existing prisons in Cuba merged with appearances of modernity.

The choice of Isla de Pinos to build the Model Prison was by President [Gerardo Machado](#) himself; although the pinero politician [Cecilio Soto Llorca](#) claimed that "privilege" for him.

In a letter to Machado, [Rogelio Zayas-Bazán](#), Minister of the Interior, expressed to him: "You were not only inspired by the excellent situation of those lands but by the desire to give color to that corner of Cuban territory ... choice of the land of [Isla de Pinos](#) and in this way contributes to the flourishing of that island ».

The above is nothing more than a mockery and offense to the Cuban people, a supreme act of guataquería to the president and a violation of the agreements of the International Penitentiary Congress that since the beginning of the century prohibited the construction of jails on islands, considering that the prisoner he would serve double punishment: the sanction for the crime plus exile.

It was acquired through the compulsory expropriation and State lands (lots 91, 92, 93, 99, 100 and 111, in the year 1925). (77, 81, 82, 86, 87, and 104 in the year [1927](#)). These lands comprised 99.5 caballerías. Note that the Model Prison comprised not only the current architectural part, today a National Monument, but an area of 162.5 caballerías, much of it devoted to the cultivation and breeding of animals.

Where the National Monument is located today was lot No. 103 known as Finca La Carlota (forcibly expropriated), whose owners were [Juana](#)

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[Crisótamo Hernández Bacallao](#) and [María Isabel Blanco Hernández](#). This expropriation was registered in the Court of First Instance of the Isla de Pinos Judicial Party, case No. 57 of [October 1925](#), Property Registry Folio 227, Volume 95. It was published in the Official Gazette of the Province of [Havana](#), year XXV, edict 242. Havana, Friday, October 23, 1925; protected by Decree No. 595 of May 22, [1907](#).