

## The independence riot of 1896 is remembered in Nueva Gerona

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When the 125th anniversary of the independence riot in this city is commemorated, the historian Roberto Únger Pérez alluded to that event, which places it as part of General Antonio Maceo's fighting strategy during the invasion from East to West.

The patriot Ramón García - a fisherman from Batabanó committed to the insurrectionary cause - served as a link between the group of conspirators in this southwestern territory and Generals Antonio Maceo and Pedro Díaz, commented the also Master of Science.

He also related that on January 21, 1896 Maceo interviewed the improvised expedition members of the Balandro Margarita and learned about the rebel movement in the then penal colony, where about 300 patriots had the perimeter of the city for jail.

The date chosen by the conspirators was July 26, dedicated to the patron saint festivities of Santa Ana, a long-standing liturgical commemoration in the Christian religion, although the theater of military operations was very risky, because in less than 500 meters there were three fortifications: the protectorate and the barracks of volunteers and cavalry.

That day the first group led by the pinero Bruno Hernández left on horseback from the town of Santa Fe, to which those stationed in Nueva

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Gerona joined and the third - made up of Juan Emilio Vargas, Evangelina Cossío, Juan Iturriaga, to add about 10 - The mission was to arrest Lieutenant Colonel José Bériz, he said.



According to the book *The West Campaign*, by José Miró Argenter - Chief of the General Staff of Lieutenant General Antonio Maceo's troops - the conspirators tied José Bériz to the head of the island's military command and raised the flag of Free Cuba.

The screams of the high Spanish officer, who arrested the young Evangelina, alerted the bloodthirsty Eduardo Abello - chief of the police - and the kidnapping was thwarted, said the university professor. He added that Juan Gutiérrez, also deported, denounced the conspirators, the key surprise factor in the success of the action was supplanted by a barricade of riflemen in front of the insurgent group that only carried machetes for weapons.

In an hour and a half the Spaniards neutralized the uprising where Miguel Matías Blanco Pantoja was wounded, who lived until the 70s of last century, considered the last mambí pinero; They assassinated the Havana poet Juan Iturriaga and Emilio Vargas after being wounded and shot because of a denouncement by Tomás Basail, he said.

He specified that the brothers Justo and Luís Pimienta, of Pinar del Río origin, were also shot, while a group was sent to the penal colonies of Ceuta and Chafarinas and 21 pineros confined in La Cabaña. Around 8:00 p.m. At the shout of Viva Cuba Libre and Viva el General Maceo, the poorly armed cavalry led by Bruno Hernández entered, who was shot dead by a rifle shot on the forehead on San

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Clemente y Pinillos Street, today 26 and José Martí, from where he left today - at the drummer's step- the pilgrimage of the locals to the obelisk that houses the mortal remains of the first martyr of Isle of Pines.

The independence uprising of July 26, 1896 clarified the Cuban sentiment of the natives of the former Isle of Pines, thanks to the link of the locals with the fighting traditions of the political deportees under the independence ideology, this was not an isolated event and we are obliged to teach it that way in our schools, said Únger Pérez.