Part III
The New Republic Childhood of the Generation of the 1920's

The close of the nineteenth century brought opportunity to Spaniards and disaster to many Cubans, a fact illustrated in the contrasting destinies of two sisters, Antonia and Lola Bonet in the small village of Santa Isabel de las Lajas. They were born into a *criollo* family of declining fortune, a fact that made marriage essential immediately upon their reaching adulthood. In the first half of the 1880s Antonia wed Julian Villareal, a Cuban whose income disappeared as he sold his land to pay debt. Lola, on the other hand, linked her future with the Spanish immigrant Laureano Falla who bought the land of his brother-in-law Julian and, by acquiring land from other impoverished land owners, laid the foundation of a vast fortune.

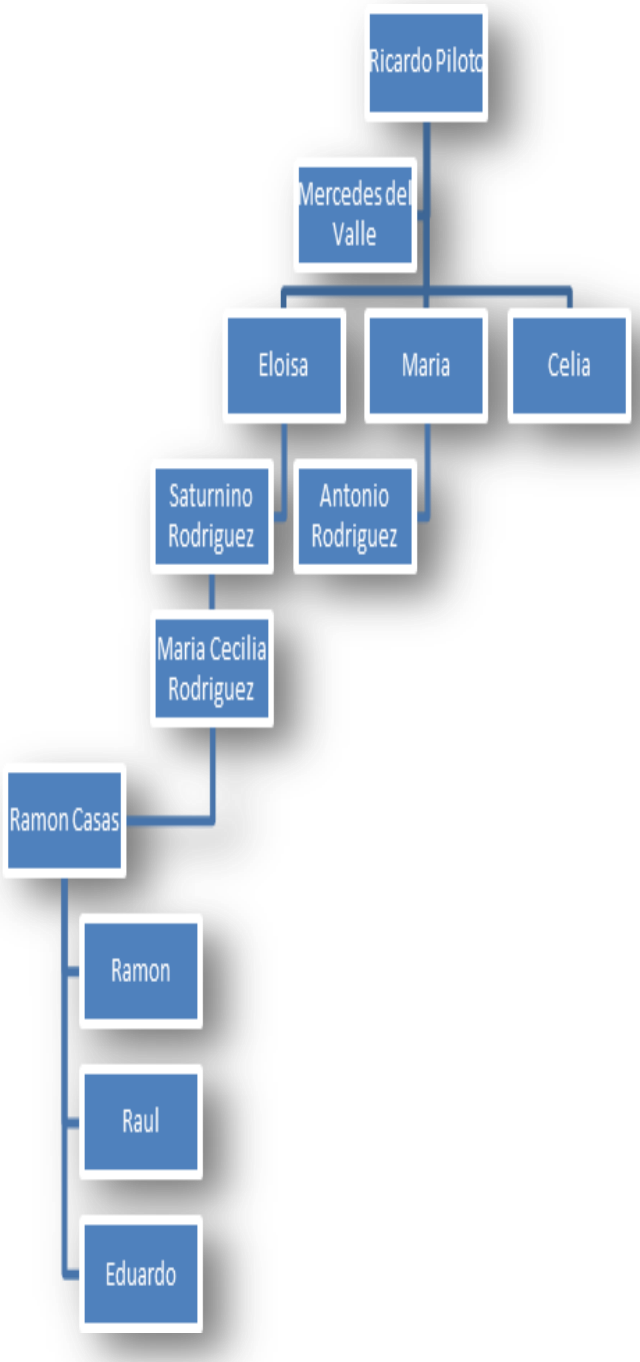
In the capital city, meanwhile, new social classes were being created. Such trophy houses as the "Castillo Piloto" the mansion of tobacco tycoon Ricardo Piloto strengthened the toe-hold of the nouveau riches in the higher echelons of Havana society. A *criollo* retaining Spanish citizenship as the son of an immigrant, Piloto formed a life-long friendship with Eduardo Casas, a Spaniard of equal commercial success. Both men identified with the republic inaugurated in 1902. Their ebullient self-confidence and patriotism encapsulated the mood of the fledgling nation.

However, the dark side of the men's material success was found in their newly built homes where their women are asked to dedicate their lives to personal appearance, children and household. Reared in this emotional hollow, the grand-daughter of the tobacco tycoon began to communicate with the dead after the death of her young mother. Her unhappiness ultimately led her to marry a family friend before completing her basic education. Drawn together in the overlapping orbits of domineering parents and grandparents, the new couple escaped the pull of their seniors only to find out that outside of this common family circumstance they had little in common.

Guillermina Villareal's passage from poverty-stricken childhood to independent adulthood through the power of education is, in a personal microcosm, the success story that the Americans hoped to achieve for the island as a whole. Reform of the education system by the government of military occupation was geared to creating a populace with democratic instincts and other values cherished by North Americans. Guillermina became a "modern woman" eschewing all the values associated with the Cuba of the 19th century in favour of the self-determination and rationalism to which she owed her emancipation from her past.

The "old money" Mendoza family survived the vicissitudes of the war intact due to canny investments in Havana real estate. As the sugar industry was yet again transformed by new technology, the Mendoza's kept their mills up-to-date and their political and economic connections active. The children born in the last two decades of the 19th century in "Amargura", the Mendoza family compound in colonial Havana, came of age in the boom period of the first

two decades of the new century. They had the memory of pre-modern, colonial Cuba while growing up in a country under the leadership of unscrupulous leaders who sacrificed the nation's collective good for their personal gain.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Maria Cecilia Rodriguez
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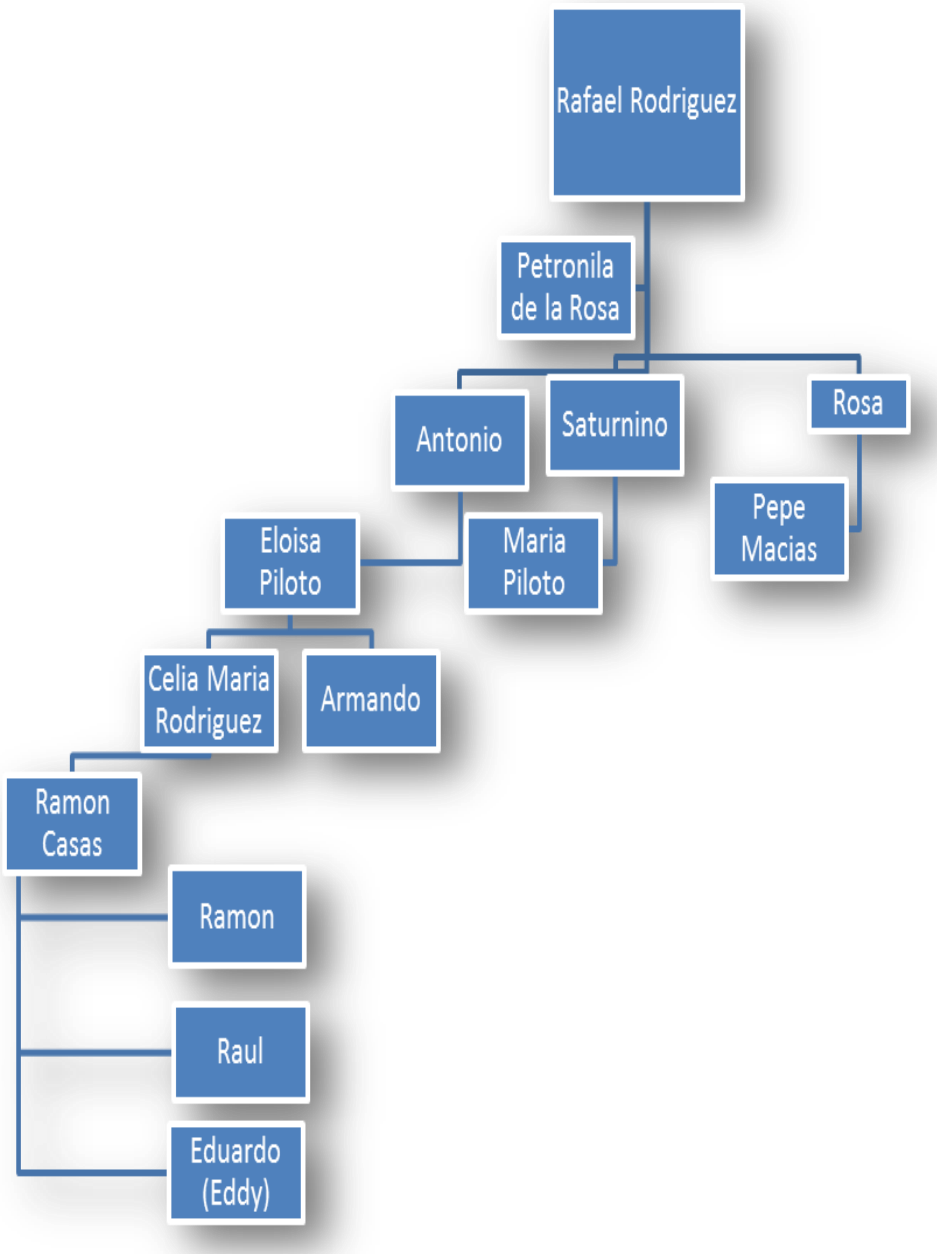
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Petronila de la Rosa
Antonio
Saturnino
Rosa
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Maria Piloto
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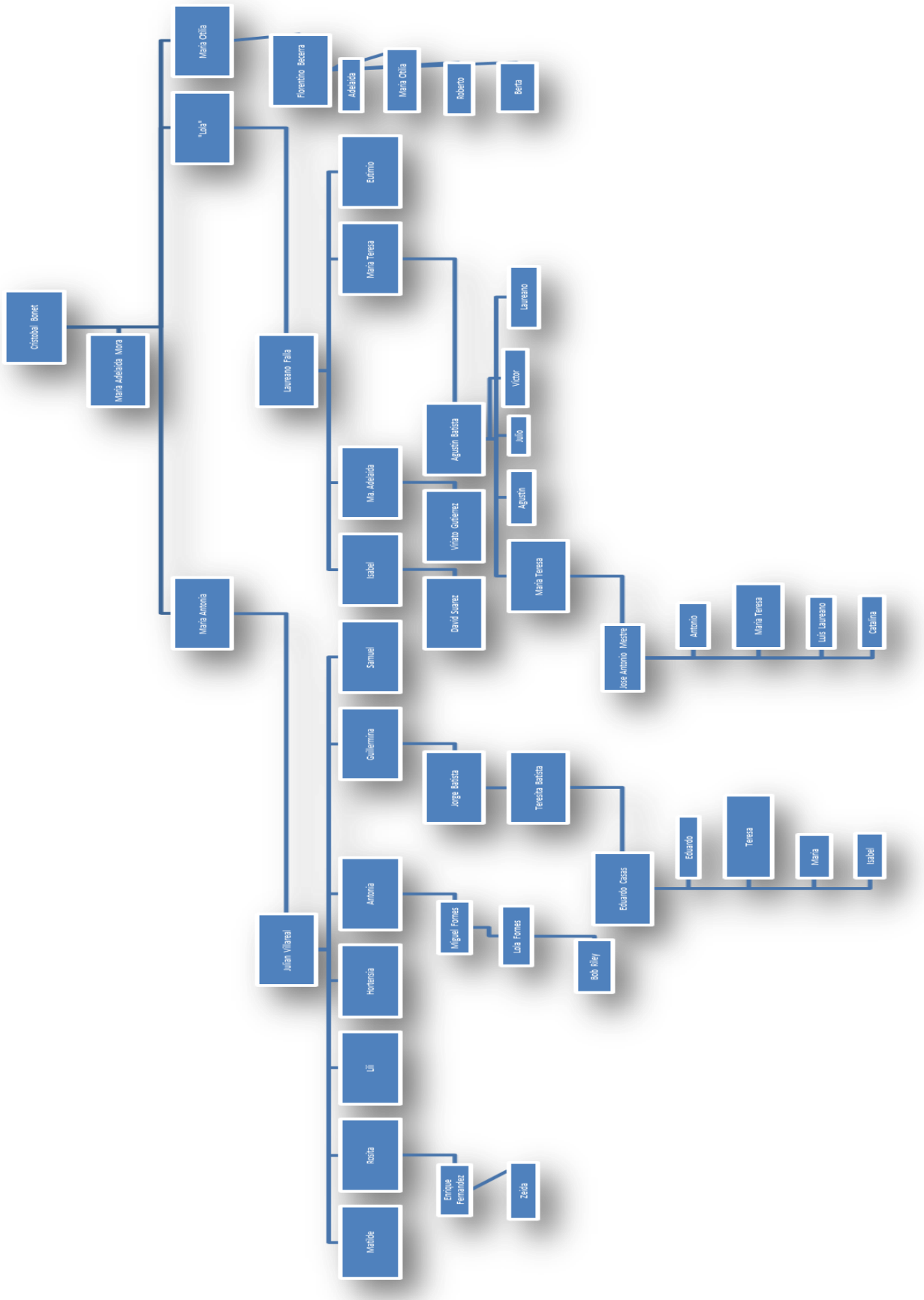
Ramon Casas
Ramon
Raul
Eduardo (Eddy)



Teresa Casas Batista

Chapter 8 Rags to Riches

> *Los ejercitos acabaron con las fincas de las familias antiguas, perdieron todo. Los Españoles, como Casas, recién llegados disfrutaron de la situacion y se hicieron ricos, tomaron estos negocios.* (The armies destroyed the farms of the old families, they lost everything. Recently arrived Spaniards such as Casas took advantage of the situation and became rich by taking over the failing businesses.)
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> Teresita Batista de Casas

Devastation of war creates economic opportunity for Spanish immigrants; Casas and Falla; the archetype of "el Gallego" retailer and money lender

La Tea (The Torching), is the name Cubans gave to a cataclysm that caused incalculable suffering during the last war of independence. It refers to the destruction of plantations, a tactic used by opposing armies to bring the island's economy to a stand-still. Killing untold numbers through plague and famine, its memory extended well into the twentieth century in the form of a resistant hatred of the Spanish military. The scorched earth military tactic irrevocably changed the distribution of wealth in Cuba, for by destroying mills, decimating crops and driving the labor from countryside most of the old families were sunk into poverty leaving the door open for newcomers.

This historical juncture in the last decades of the 19th century, when land was cheap, livestock all but eradicated and the rural population uprooted and in need of housing, called for a new kind of player in the Cuban economy, the proverbial self-made man. Energized by an early hardscrabble existence and knowing commerce from the ground up, he re-invests the profits from modest initial ventures striking quickly as opportunities present themselves. Attuned and responsive, he benefits from the features of a transitioning economy: new markets, a quickened pace of trade and rock-bottom prices offered by economic victims. Notable examples of this winning type were Eduardo Casas from the port of Sada, in the province of Galicia and Laureano Falla from the Cantabria region also in northern Spain. As Spaniards they would have been generically called "Gallegos" by Cubans who would also have regarded them ambivalently as unfairly priveleged economic players. Irene Aloha Wright, a sharp-eyed American writer who lived in Cuba during those years, describes the type:

> …wherever a bodega (general store, but especially a grocery) stands at a crossroads, one finds a Spaniard mopping up the counter, across which he sells drinks, provisions, the commonest hardware, and, perhaps, hats, shoes, cheap print cloth, and coarse linen. He is an important personage because he also lends money, and when conditions or events so alarm him that he no longer advances cash or grants credit, his district knows that times are hard. He charges a usurious rate of interest, there being no law against it, he keeps everybody in his debt, and he pockets the profits of their labor. He buys and re-sells their crops, to his advantage, actually monopolizing what little trade there is in his vicinity. In towns and cities, similarly, the Spanish control, I believe, commerce both wholesale and

retail. They are the merchants, large and small, of the country, and constitute the most considerable foreign element of the population.[1]

Spaniards attracted with transition to colono system

Eduardo Casas, according to family lore, began accumulating his fortune by driving around the war-torn countryside in a horse and buggy with a bag of gold at his feet. After the devastation of each of the wars of independence, when businesses had to be restarted and Cuba welcomed a multitude of immigrants needing to establish themselves, his cash-procured stock of farms, horses and real estate brought handsome returns.

Almost 300,000 Spaniards entered Cuba between 1882 and 1894. The Spanish government knew that it had to act quickly to avert another *criollo* rebellion. It set out to increase the proportion of loyal, white subjects in the population by attracting settlers from its poorest provinces. They were enticed with the promise of free land which was available thanks to the new system of sugar production. The industrialized mills required such volumes of raw cane that it was necessary to cultivate larger areas of countryside. The owners of the mills or *ingenios* turned to renting or selling land and contracting the crop growing to tenant farmers or smaller landowners in a *colono*. With the introduction of railways, cane that was cut from a tract of land farther than the immediate vicinity of the mill could be brought while still fresh to the *central* for processing.

A Spaniard from a poor village, who had the farming skills to work a *colono*, could turn his fortune around in short order. Soldiers were given free land grants in some of the more thinly settled areas. Other opportunities lay in commerce, supplying the enormous number of troops on the island as well as money-lending and exporting, activities protected for the Spanish by a system of taxation.

The rise of Falla from apprentice to supplier of Spanish army to land-owner; marriage to a criolla and family

In 1873 Laureano Falla while still an adolescent began his apprenticeship with his merchant uncle in Santa Isabel de las Lajas, in Las Villas province. The village had grown around the rail depot of a line that ran north from the southern shore port of Cienfuegos. At this time, during the first war of independence, rebel army groups carried out regular guerrilla attacks on the Spanish supply trains. Lajas needed Spanish merchants to keep its army depot supplied. In 1879, by then an adult, Laureano Falla moved from the village to Cienfuegos to work as an assistant to another Spaniard whose enterprises included warehouses and livestock. In this inter-war period he began to buy land from the failing plantation owners and organize farms to supply produce to the warehouses. From the profit of the tobacco and fruit as well as cattle, he continued to invest in cane fields. Gradually he evolved from managing *colonos* to owning large tracts of land and sugar mills. Falla's ascension in Cuban society was complete once he became a *hacendado*, a

[1] Wright, Irene A. *Cuba,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910) http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b270357;page=root;view=image;size=100;seq=13 (Accessed. 28 June 2011)., 133

member of the landowning class. But, not yet content, he continued to invest, accumulate and produce. By the 1920's he had become one of the richest men on the island. [2]

In the 1880s Laureano returned to the village where he had served his apprenticeship. There, he courted and married Lola, one of daughters of the Bonet family who had been landowners before their properties had been depleted by the war. Lola's eldest sister Antonia married a local *criollo* landowner of, Julian Villareal, who came from a similar background. Changes in fortune of the Bonet sisters reflected the economic advantages held by the newcomer Spaniards. The sisters' experiences—one of downward the other of upward mobility, mirror the larger reality on the island. Villareal's living disappears when he is forced to sell land after a disastrous fire in 1895. Falla buys his land and through his trading privileges as a Spanish citizen and by diversifying, attains even greater financial power than the former landowning elite. He and Lola have four children who survive childhood: Isabelita, Adelaida (Lala), Maria Teresa and Eutimio.[3] One these daughters, Maria Teresa, and one of Antonia Bonet Villareal's daughters, Guillermina, would marry two Batista brothers in the 1920's thus bringing the families of the two Bonet sisters with their divergent economic paths back together in Havana.

Casas and Piloto friends and entrepreneurs; social mobility in turn of century Havana society

It was likely in Havana in the 1880s that the Gallego Eduardo Casas met the criollo Ricardo Piloto from Pinar del Rio, the easternmost province of the island known for its premium tobacco. The latter, the son of an immigrant from the Canary Islands, who as such retained his Spanish citizenship privileges, had accumulated a fortune by branching out from his base in tobacco to real estate, and land investments. Piloto's tobacco fields of the Artemisa region were serviced by the Ferrocarril del Oeste completed by the 1870s.

Around the last decade of the century both Piloto and Casas settled their families in the capital where they fit into a society that, with the destruction of the sugar aristocracy, had become more accepting of newcomers and new money. The granting of freedom of organization to *criollos* in the final days of the colonial administration along with the influx of Spanish immigrants led to an explosion of civic institutions, clubs and mutual support societies.[4]

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[2] De la Maza, Aquiles. *Eutimio Falla Bonet, su obra filantropica*. Nota Biográfica (Geneva, Switzerland. 1971. c. Maria Teresa Falla de Batista).

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Culture began to reach broader spectrums of the population by 1880, touching even the poorest. With the opening of new institutions and the granting of greater liberties regarding the right of association, larger number of people participated in civil activities. Concurrently, the weakening of the power of the former slave-holding aristocracy facilitated social mobility and integration. Associations dedicated to charitable activities and recreational pastimes proliferated. The first sporting clubs appeared, as did popular illustrated publications, theatrical and musical performances catered to a broader public. Stimulated by the new republican political structure urban life developed with a more dynamic rhythm than heretofore. Venegas, Menocal, and Shaw. "Havana between Two Centuries," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 22, Cuba Theme Issue (1996) 13-35

One quarter of the population of the city at this time was Spanish. Immigrants like Casas were recruited by their regional club at the gates of Triscornia, the immigrant processing centre on the eastern side of the harbour. These regional associations built hospitals on the outskirts of the city and grandiose clubhouses downtown. The wedding cake architecture of the Centro Gallego and Centro Asturiano as well as their domination of a prominent location in the Parque Central announced the fact that many formerly poor immigrants were now men of influence: they would not be going home tomorrow.

Havana was a magnet for the newly wealthy. It was the location of the most prestigious schools for sons, the top marriage prospects for daughters, fashionable shopping and the chance to rub shoulders with the best society. Houses in the El Vedado district were designed in the latest Beaux Arts styles to support the cultural and social aspirations of the newcomers to the capital.

One can picture Casas and Piloto in their favorite restaurant in Havana around 1894. Under the potted palms the men exchange vital tips on new opportunities as they lean back and unbutton the straining vests, suck on their cigars and turn their watches so that the gold catches the sunlight.

Eduardo Casas (left) and Ricardo Piloto (right).

Havana magazines and dailies reported the names of those giving and attending dinners and dances; gradually the social register expanded beyond the four-hundred deeply intermarried *criollo* families. In a culture that had only recently been drawn out of its feudal past, families with new money dangled lovely daughters before the sons of impoverished families with old titles.

Those who had only recently arrived at the social heights were justified in feeling that it was a precarious achievement. They could be the target of jealous denouncements of being too dark-skinned, too provincial or too uneducated to pass as a member of society. The excitement and anxiety of Havana social life at the turn of the century reflected the snakes and ladders treachery of genteel judgement.

Into this heady setting entered two comely young men from good middle-class stock of the town of Cienfuegos, the brothers Antonio and Saturnino Rodriguez. They were to court two wealthy sisters, daughters of Ricardo Piloto and, to the great irritation of their future father-in-law, be accepted in their tandem proposals of marriage.

Marriages of Piloto and Casas with wives of opposing personalities; the war and exile of Piloto family

Mercedes "Pepa" del Valle, who married Ricardo Piloto in the early 1880's had reared her daughters Eloisa, Maria and Celia with a love of refinement, not only material luxury but also in an expansiveness of the spirit and imagination through poetry and literature. A son, Augusto, died in childhood. In the early 1890's Ricardo Piloto and Eduardo Casas would have on occasion met each other with their spouses, respectively Mercedes del Valle and Rita Bacallao.

Mercedes was older, having three teenage daughters while Rita had only the first of what would be five boys. These were not the only differences that separated the two women. Rita derided any form of social or cultural pretension, seeing this as mere snobbery to be unmasked and mocked. The eldest of twelve siblings, the first eleven of whom were female, she had the self-assurance of someone who had been forced early in life to figure things out for herself. Conversations between the two must have been polite but strained. Their bosoms swelling like pouter pigeons, Rita and Mercedes appear in photographs as fin-de-siêcle trophy wives, the product of rich sauces, tight corsets and glittering personal adornment. Outside of this decorous frame, they were doubtlessly consumed by the demands of a life that included the war, servants, large homes, and children.

Mercedes del Valle de Piloto

The Piloto family fled the country with the outbreak of the war in 1895. Piloto was known as an independence supporter moreover, his Pinar del Rio farms were in the area occupied by Antonio

Maceo's rebel army that year. The leader of the Spanish forces, General Weyler, had banned the export of tobacco in an attempt to ruin the pro-rebel cigar workers in Florida. [5] Piloto stayed in Fort Mead, Florida, to which his tobacco holdings extended, and then moved on to New York City. He had been told that the best contribution he could make to the cause was to support the rebel army with money sent from New York. Like many wealthy Cubans he made sure that his money was in American bank accounts for the duration of the war.[6] While there, Mercedes del Valle is operated on for cervical cancer and dies during the operation.

Eloisa, Celia and Maria Piloto del Valle. An undated portrait of the three girls in mourning dress was likely taken in 1898 in Tampa, on the return trip to Havana from their period in exile.

[5] Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*. Da Capo Press Inc., 1998 (re-print of original New York: 1977 edition) 334

[6] Eduardo Casas, Personal interview. June 18-20, 2010

Maria Piloto

Eloisa Piloto

Teresa Casas Batista

Havana social life; Debutantes at Carnival; The Rodriguez brothers court the Piloto sisters

> *They have powdered their hair, and black masks hide the upper halves of their rouged and patched faces.*—Irene A. Wright 1910

We own portraits of Mercedes' daughters, the two Piloto girls who survived to a marriageable age. The photographs reveal Eloisa and Maria elegantly dressed around the time of their presentation to Havana society at the turn of the century. Eloisa's eyebrows bracket her dark eyes, giving her a permanently plaintive expression. Maria is shown in sports clothes, in the American "Gibson Girl" style, with a fan giving her a Latin touch. Oddly, a drawn-in mask covers her face. One wonders if perhaps a terrible disfigurement has been hidden by the ink. Or, if it was done as a joke, why would such a vandalized image have been kept?

The portrait is less perplexing once it's understood as carnival fashion. If the expression on the face was not pleasing to the sitter,[7] but Maria was nevertheless proud of her figure and dress, she might have altered the image so that it showed her more flatteringly in the familiar guise of a young lady dressed for a masked ball.[8] Such balls were just one of many events that offered a chance to see and be seen by eligible men.

The ink mask signals a set of attitudes that can today be only be dimly appreciated. As an intervention on a portrait it drains the subject of her identity while drawing attention to her excellent figure and fashionably anonymous allure. This corresponds to how she would be seen at a masked ball. But Maria could also have inserted the mask on her image as an unconscious defense against the stringent social demand for beauty—for a young woman's destiny was stamped by her face.

Walter Adolphe Roberts, an American who wrote about the history of Havana, underscored the vibrancy of its cultural life at this time. He noted the importance of the theatres as meeting ground for almost all levels of society. Each one had its peculiar atmosphere, programming and following. The colonial elegance of the Tacon Theatre was the setting for opera, drama and variety shows. On the Prado was the Payret; the Albisu was known for its one-act comedies; the

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[7] According to Eduardo Casas, Maria was also self-conscious about her severe acne. Personal interview. June 18-20, 2010

[8] Irene A. Wright describes carnival dress during the early 20th century: "By four o'clock in the afternoon there is squawking and squalling of tin horns in every quarter, and carriages enveloped in bright cambric and adorned with paper flowers carry girls in fancy dress toward Prado and Malecon. They have powdered their hair, and black masks hide the upper halves of their rouged and patched faces. …The walks are filled with people of every class, color, and condition, all in the very best attire their wardrobes can supply. Especially pretty are the little children, some in the gay costumes they wear to the "infantile balls" all the regional societies give on the afternoons of the four Sundays of Carnival... *Cuba,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910)

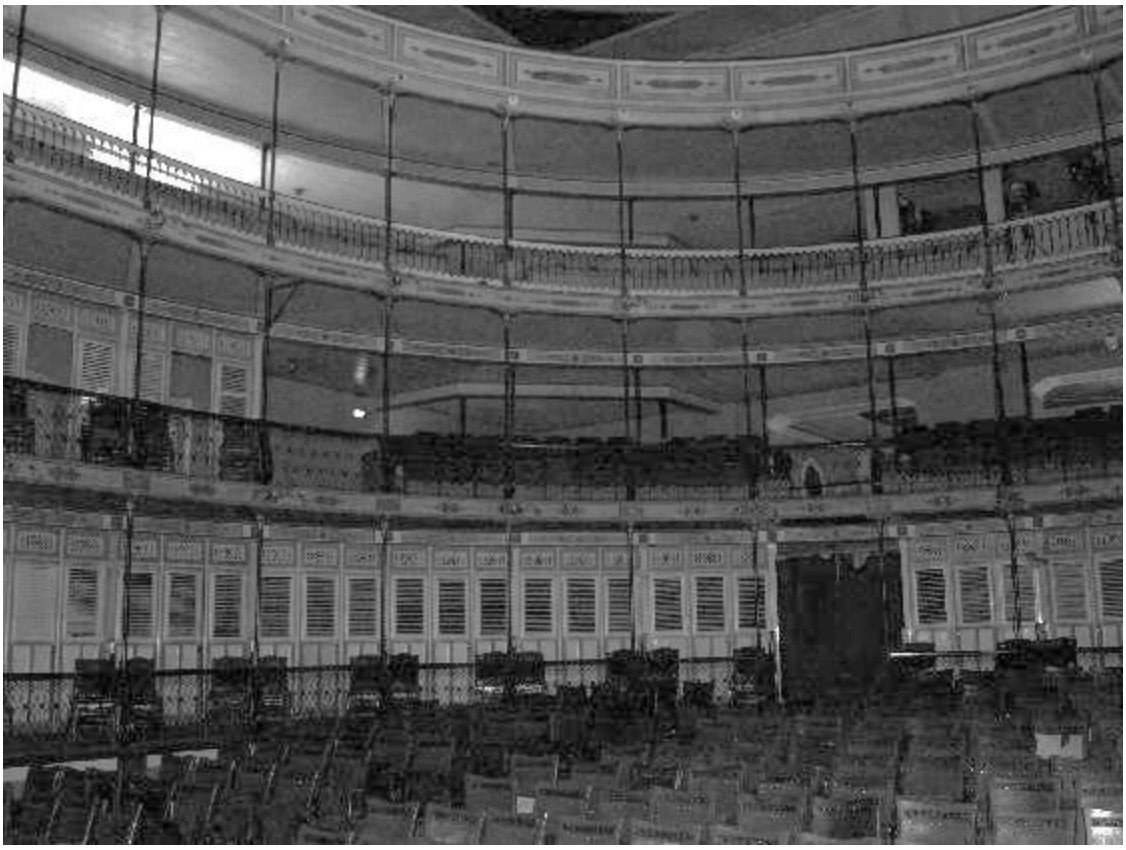
Jane for integrating circus attractions within its dramas, and the Villanueva was a repertory house. [9]

But far and above the other entertainments, the balls, and especially the masked balls held in winter months at the theaters, were the highlight of the social calendar. It was likely in this kind of setting at the close of the war and the beginning of the century that the Rodriguez brothers met the Piloto sisters. Perhaps they drew them out with mention of their family connection to a well-known poet from their native Cienfuegos. This would have encouraged the telling of the young men's family history:

In the 1870s a young criollo, Rafael Rodriguez, married Petronila de la Rosa, a childless Cuban widow of a French immigrant from Haiti. Rafael was the owner of an enterprise specializing in decorative architectural and ship woodwork. He and Petronila raised three children, Saturnino, Antonio and Rosa. The family was related to Clotilde Rodriguez "la poeta del Damuji' who is memorialized in a bust in Cienfuego. Damuji is the name of the river that empties into the port of the city. Perhaps the brothers also boasted of how the artistic nature of their family surfaced in the intricate Art Nouveau woodwork of the celebrated Cienfuegos landmark, the Terry Theatre, the work of Rafael Rodriguez's company.


bust of Clotilde Rodriguez, Cienfuegos

[9] Roberts, Walter Adolphe, *Havana, portrait of a city*. (New York: Coward McCann Inc. 1953) 101



Terry Theatre, Cienfuegos

Rafael Rodriguez, 1876

Eloisa and Maria, fresh from exile, were recovering from the death of their mother. The Piloto girls fell in love despite their father's disdain of Rodriguez brothers; "not fit to even take dogs out to piss," was what he was reputed to have said.[10] The marriages nevertheless took place and the daughters brought their new husbands to live in their father's Havana mansion.

Echoing Loss in the "Palacio Piloto"

The Rodriguez-Piloto marriages were the basis of a less than happy family life in Piloto's "castle". Eloisa's infatuation with Saturnino Rodriguez evaporated as she became aware that, a clerk by profession, her husband was a rather rigid, conservative individual. The somber mood of the household was sealed by several deaths in the first thirteen years of the century: Celia, the third Piloto daughter, was the victim of a fever when still a teen, and Eloisa herself died, like her mother of cervical cancer in 1913 leaving two children. Antonio Rodriguez and Maria Piloto were childless; Antonio died in the 1930's and "Titi Maria" would remain an emotionally remote presence throughout her long life in the margins of her niece's family.

Celia Rodriguez Piloto

In this studio portrait of Celia Rodriguez Piloto around the time of her mother's death, it is hard to see evidence of what would become a crushing melancholy. An adolescent at the time, she was left with her infant brother Armando in the expanse of her grandfather's residence. Her aunt "Titi" Maria formally sat her down and explained that she would in no way be mothering her. Her father occupied a strictly masculine world of work and newspaper reading and in any case was incapable of the intellectual energy and emotional involvement craved by his daughter. Celia

[10] Eduardo Casas, Personal interview. June 18-20, 2010

would complain that she grew up with an aloof father, an uncaring aunt and a domineering grandfather.[11]

To add to this sense of abandonment, the memory of her dead mother was under assault. At that time she learned of the rumor that her mother had had an affair with the family doctor and that her young brother Armando was the child of this union. Celia began to suffer from night terrors that caused her to scream in her sleep. For solace she turned to the spirit-world. She began to see individuals on the other side, most frequently a young male cousin who had died. In her loneliness, Celia discovered a powerful intuitive capacity that would later fuel her literary writing and spiritual self-development.[12]

As in many Cuban homes of the era, there was a disjuncture between the official version and the reality of family life in the Piloto home. As a widower Ricardo maintained a relationship with one of the household's black servants. The product of this unofficial union was a daughter who as an adult became a teacher and had two sons who, thanks to the Piloto inheritance, attended school with Celia's own sons. The publically unacknowledged wife, her daughter, and the latter's sons were folded into the family under the guise of a cherished household servant and her descendants.[13]

Celia Rodriguez and Ramon Casas around the time of their 1918 wedding

As soon as she had the option, Celia escaped the world of secrets and loss that had closed around her in her grandfather's home. She had attended a secular school, Sanchez and Tiant, for primary

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] According to Eduardo Casas, after the death of his wife and before he remarried he had relations with his black maid and as a result had a daughter who became a teacher. The daughter of the servant was called Mimía González. He was godfather to one of the teacher's two sons. They both attended LaSalle where mixed race students were accepted but the unwritten rule was that if a white student made a complaint against a black student the latter was dismissed. One became a Christian brother. Both ended up in the U.S. Personal interview. June 18-20, 2010

and secondary education. Her goal was to become a teacher but she cut short her education. At seventeen she accepted the offer of marriage to someone she had known most of her life, the son of her grandfather's great friend Eduardo Casas. Before the latter died from heart disease he had appointed Ricardo Piloto to manage the fortune that he left to his wife and five sons. This arrangement led to more frequent visits between the two families after Eduardo's death. On the 22nd of November, 1919, hoping to close the door on her adolescent years, the eighteen-year-old Celia left her grandfather's mansion, her school friends and books, to take up the alternate isolation of a young country doctor's wife.[14]

In the 1880s the cards were shuffled, resulting in new winners and losers in the Cuban economy. It was at this point that my paternal ancestors come together in the capital city of the island. Eduardo Casas and Ricardo Piloto though respectively Spanish immigrant and first generation criollo, formed a friendship based on love for their new country and a talent for entrepreneurship. The rags to riches transformation of the two men permitted their families' entry into the new elite who enjoyed the entertainment that abounded in early 20th century Havana. The two families were further linked through the 1920 marriage of Ramon Casas, Eduardo's son and Celia Rodriguez, Ricardo's grand-daughter.

Several decades before this marriage, in the provinces of Santa Clara and Las Villas in the centre of the island Maria Antonia Bonet married criollo Julian Villareal and her sister the Spaniard Laureano Falla. The first couple struggled while the second prospered during the rocky economic period between the two wars of independence. The difference in their fortunes underscores the advantage the colonial administration granted to incoming Spaniards.

Two cousins entered their existence on the threshold of the century in the central province of Las Villas. Guillermina Villareal Bonet born in Santa Isabel de las Lajas to Antonia Bonet and Julian Villareal in 1895, and her cousin Maria Teresa Falla Bonet born four years later in the nearby southern port city of Cienfuegos to Lola Bonet and Lauerano Falla. The girls would experience radically different childhoods. The destruction of the Villareal *colonia* and death of Julian makes for a grim beginning to Guillermina's life; Maria Teresa on the other hand reaped the rewards of her Spanish father's wartime investments. Twenty-five years later the cousin's lives would parallel when they married two Batista brothers, grandsons of Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, in Havana.

Unlike the majority of their class and generation, Don Antonio's sons successfully hung on to their properties. Following in the footsteps of their Pedroso-Montalvo ancestors, they made their capital work by investing in new technology for their mills. In a prescient move, they went into banking and real estate after the second war of independence. Being members of the Cuban ruling class and having attended the same universities as the officials of the American occupation administration, they had influence at the highest levels as well as with northern investors. When it came to sugar tariff negotiations with the Americans, sugar production quotas or railroad or utility concessions with Cuban officials, they were likely to be counted in.

The two sides of the family, Casas Rodriguez Piloto and Batista Villareal Bonet reflected the new top-rung social mix of the island: criollo, peninsular, old money and new money, worldly

[14] Eduardo Casas, Personal interview. June 18-20, 2010

and provincial. Their paths crossed in the intensified economy and urbanized landscape of the early twentieth century. This pivotal generation that came of age in the 1880's carried the preoccupations and the seeds of conflict that would dominate the family and the nation for the next century.

The economic health of the island was tied to the price of sugar in world markets. This would go precipitously up and then down in the first decades of the twentieth century. Along with the economic instability there was crisis of faith in government and leadership. The generation of the 1920's in particular, the sons, grandsons and son-in-laws of the self-made men of the boom years felt dispossessed of the power of their fathers and the promises of the republic.

Increased contact with other cultures, in particular that of the US enhanced the younger generation's anger at being denied what they saw as an entitlement to good government. Their daughters, on the other hand, deal with their own sources of grief. Suffering from being in the shadows of highly patriarchal domestically-bound roles, only gradually, beginning in the 1930's and as a result of the marginalisation of their husbands during the depression, do they come into a more powerful role in the family.

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Chapter 9 Guillermina: Progressive Cuban Educator, Self-Created Woman

> *Ideals of national sovereignty, democracy, an educated citizenry, and feminism converged in the twentieth century as Cuban patriots took education as the cornerstone of independence and democratic rule and tapped women as the educators of future generations*.—K. Lynn Stoner[15]

Our family regarded Julia Gonzalez de Mendoza's leather bound memoir, *Fechas de Mi Vida* as an important sourcebook on our ancestral past. In contrast, the written remembrances of our maternal grandmother, who we called *Abuela* (Grandmother), lay forgotten for many years. Papi found the untitled stenographer's pad several years after Mami's death in the recesses of her desk. It details Abuela's early life of poverty in the village of Santa Isabel de las Lajas and then the town of Sagua la Grande at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Guillermina Villareal met Jorge Batista in the mid 1920's in the home of Lola Falla, her aunt, in the El Vedado district of Havana. The family story was that he dropped in to listen to the radio broadcast of a boxing fight. Guillermina was a staying there to take exams for the University of Havana's doctorate in Pedagogy; this was a degree she was pursuing by correspondence while working as a teacher in the countryside.[16] She was already in her early thirties and Jorge was nearing forty. Within the comforting circle of the family they relaxed and came to an understanding. Whether they loved each other or not was always a great source of unsatisfied curiosity for her daughter. Her Batista aunts always insisted to her that it was indeed the case that Jorge and Guillermina had fallen in love.

Origins in Santa Isabel de las Lajas

Guillermina was born with the resurgence of the war for independence in the central province of Santa Clara,[17] the epicentre of the conflict. Indeed, Guillermina's story of her troubled childhood and ultimate triumph in affirming her own independence from her family was folded in her mind with the larger national struggle for self-determination.

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[15] Stoner, K. Lynn, *From the house to the streets: the Cuban women's movement for legal reform*, Duke University Press, 1997. 131

[16] The degree was never granted because she did not complete her thesis.

[17] It was known as Las Villas after 1940.

According to her birth certificate Maria Otilia Villareal y Bonet was born on March 7, 1895 in Santa Isabel de las Lajas. Likely named after her aunt Maria Otilia Bonet y Mora she nevertheless was known her entire life as Guillermina. There is no mention of any affectionate abbreviation such as those of her sisters: Rosita from Rosa, Lilí from Maria de los Angeles and Ñiquita from Antonia. The father is listed on the birth certificate as Julian Antonio Villareal y Manrique born in Cienfuegos and the mother is Maria Antonia Bonet y Mora born in Lajas.

A good story-teller, Guillermina opens her story, written in shaky but excellent penmanship in the steno pad, with an image that vividly establishes the setting. It is a scene of light-hearted fun and agricultural bounty to frame the darker reminiscences to follow:

> "*Tírame una cañita!"* (Throw me a little piece of cane!) this is my earliest memory. The tracks of the Lajas railway ran behind my house, which extended from one street to another. Lajas was located in a sugar cane growing region and during harvest season trains constantly passed by with cars loaded with cane for the nearby refineries. The workers who traveled sitting on top of the cane kindly threw us down a few of the best pieces.

Cuban Sugar Mills of the 19th Century

> My father had died when I was three years old and my brother only three months old. His parents were both from Grand Canary Island, having made a fortune, and they owned much land dedicated to livestock and growing sugar cane. Long before my birth, upon my grandfather's death, the divided fortune was not much and my father dedicated himself to conserving his inheritance. But the wars (1868-1878) (1880-1881) and the last, the one of Independence from Spain (1895-1898) so impoverished the country that, outside the cities, life was very poor.

According to the copy of the family tree of the "Arbol Bonet" produced for the Mestre-Batista genealogy study, [18] Maria Adelaida Mora (b. 1839), the daughter of the man who had founded Santa Isabel de las Lajas married Bonet a Catalan immigrant (b.1817). They had three daughters who had descendants: the eldest, Antonia married Julian Villareal in 1881, a man more than twice her age whose parents had immigrated from the largest of the Canary Islands. Dolores (Lola), the second sister married a Spaniard from Cantabria, Laureano Falla who was to become very wealthy. The third sister Maria Otilia, settled in Sagua with a man named Florentino Becerra.

By the time Bonet died in 1886 his daughters have likely been provided with more or less secure means through marriage. Abuela mentions that her mother, Antonia, was on poor terms with her husband's family and so the network she turned to after her husband's death in 1898 was that of the Bonet sisters. This was essential, for as the Bonet family tree shows, Antonia had six girls and two boys, a much larger brood than that of her two sisters Lola and Otilia who respectively had three and four children. Abuela makes no mention of a second boy in the family; only one son, Samuel the youngest child, enters the story. "Rogelio," the fourth in birth order according to the Mestre-Batista family tree perhaps died in infancy. In the same genealogical chart some of the names of Antonia's children are not consistent with those they used in life. For example, Maria Otilia was named after an aunt but always called Guillermina. Likely the names listed on the birth certificates were intended to strengthen family ties by honoring relatives and were later substituted by others.

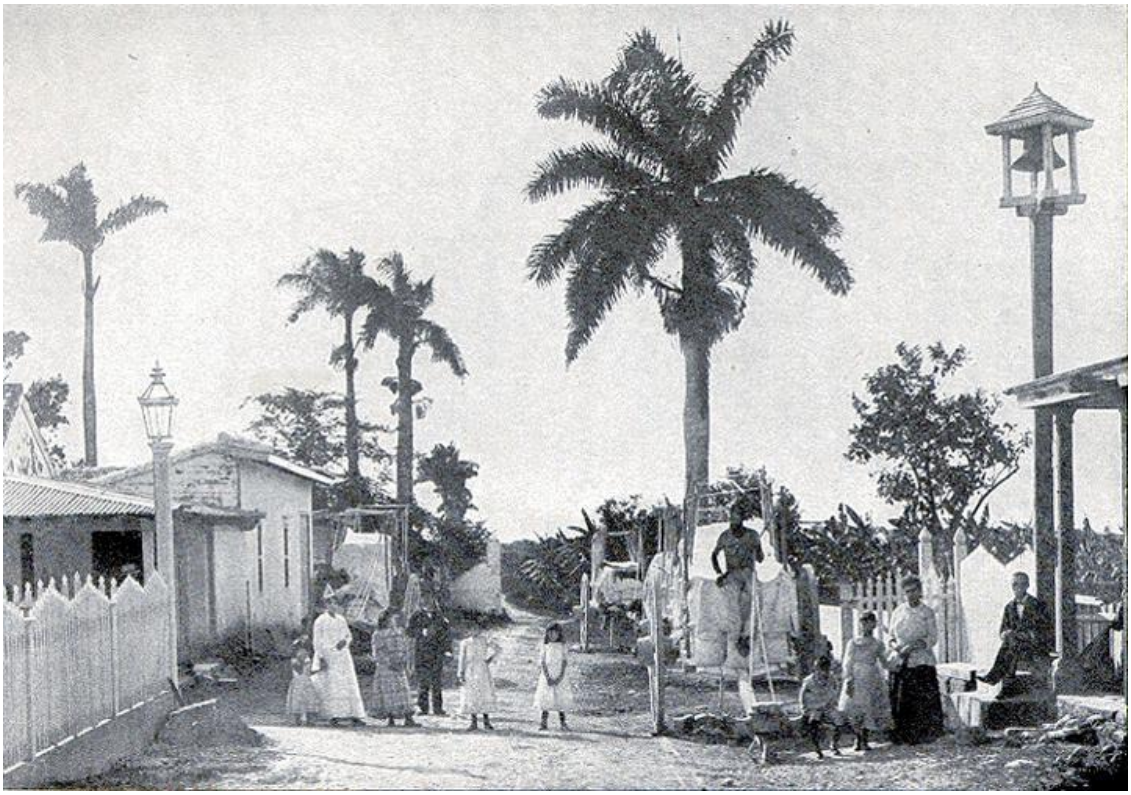
Guillermina describes the crisis in which the family found itself upon the death of her father in 1898. The problem, in part, lay in the discrepancy between the ages of her parents. Her father was twice as old as her mother and so left many young dependents on his death. [19]

> ...when he died at about sixty years of age after a long illness that finished with the little that remained he left my mother with eight children, the oldest sixteen. [We were] ill-prepared because in those days outside the large cities it was enough that women could read and although she was extraordinarily intelligent, in those times it would not have occurred to anyone that a woman work outside the house. At the same time the blockade of the island and the internment of the population in the towns were coming to an end. The Americans had blockaded the island to finish the war more quickly and the Spanish had ordered that everyone leave the countryside and move to the towns so that they could not help the insurgents.

[18] *Geneología Biográfica de la familia Mestre Batista*

[19] "My father had married at age 35, the same age as my grandmother, when my mother was only 17 years old." Batista Villareal, Guillermina. unpublished memoires

"Waiting for food outside the office in Matanzas of the US consul Alexander Brice, 1898. Cuba. Credit: Photographer/artist unknown. Collection Miscelaneous Items" toto photos



Cuban Sugar Mills of the 19th Century

Teresa Casas Batista

Cuba, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1898

Cuba, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1898, detail: Province of Santa Clara

Cuba, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1898, detail: Lajas (Sta. Isabel de las Lajas)

In her old age Guillermina disdained nostalgia or any sentimental version of the past. This attitude grew from having seen her mother's inability to adapt to altered economic circumstances. In reference to her she recalls, "She was very conscious of the status of her family; her ancestors had founded five of the principal cities of the province and her Grandfather Mora had founded Lajas. We were related to very distinguished families in the village and the province and it was impossible for her to forget this so that on top of our poverty we had to constantly struggle to maintain appearances." A true child of the new republic Guillermina saw her mother as a victim of social pretensions, blind to the fact that the world that had existed before the war had irrevocably vanished.

Surviving the Famine with assistance from Family and Former Slaves

The central provinces of Santa Clara, Matanzas and Camaguey were the focus of the war of independence. To stop the rebels penetrating the western provinces from their base of strength in the east, the Spanish army reinforced and added to the line of fortifications and barracks running north-south in the centre of the island. This was not an impenetrable defense. With the support of the peasants the rebel army went back and forth with ease as guerrilla units, taking refuge in the dense forests if the Spanish gave chase. General Weyler, aiming to break the support network, ordered all rural families to abandon the countryside and report to towns where they were collected into camps lacking proper shelter and food. Famine and epidemics followed. Guillermina retained memories of the widespread suffering, describing the children who came begging to the door. Her own family, meanwhile, had very little.

> My mother's stories were horrifying. All those people with nothing to eat, full of disease and misery took refuge under house porches and other places where they could take shelter. My mother said that before they ate, although they had little, they had to close all the doors and windows so that the people outside would not enter. Many died of hunger and more than once my mother found people dead in our entrance. No one could do anything because they couldn't be sure that they would have enough for themselves. My aunt Lolita was married to a Spanish merchant and gave us what she could. It was not much but we survived and finally the war ended, the farmers returned home and instead of the Spanish flag there was the American one. But for us life did not change very much. We were still a widow of 43 years and eight children. We had the house where we lived and not much more. My aunt had moved to Cienfuegos; my mother was too proud to accept help from her relatives, knowing that they were all were in the same situation. My mother, I don't know why, never had a good relationship with my father's family and when he died it nearly ended. I was not aware of the situation but I knew that there was little to eat, the other necessities did not exist: clothing, (even I was dressed in black) could last, school was free and the doctor prescribed drugs that were made in the pharmacy very cheaply and he never charged.
>
> Every day Tomas came to our house. Tomas was a black who had been our slave but had not accepted independence from the family. He did the heaviest jobs– cutting wood for the kitchen, drawing water from the well, and helping my older sisters in the kitchen. I remember when he was finished in the evening he would pass by the window where my mother put my younger brother to sleep and invariably his greeting was "Until tomorrow, Dona Antoñica" and she always replied "God willing, Tomas". We all loved Tomas very much and after we moved to Sagua every year Ines and Honorata, who also had been our slaves, visited us. Honorata continued in the house and was my caregiver but when the situation got worse they left us but lived across the road. After I was bathed and dressed me in the afternoon I would go to Honorata who always had a sweet for me.

It was largely through food supplied by her sister Lola in Cienfuegos and the assistance of their former slaves that the Villareal Bonet family survived the worst days of the war. The other Bonet sister, Otilia, living in Sagua by the turn of the century, established a base there for Antonia and her children by helping to prepare the eldest, Matilde, to teach.[20] The family followed, leaving the Lajas house and lands to tenants. Teaching, one of the few professions open to women, was to become the life-line of the family.

[20] In 1903 the second sister Rosita, fourteen years older than Guillermina, and much attached to her as her godmother, had married and moved to Cienfuegos. The third eldest sister, Maria de los Angeles (Lilí) is rarely mentioned. Hortensia, Antonia (Ñiquita) is the middle daughters, and Guillermina and Samuel were the boy and girl "babies" of the family.

“Reconcentrados por Weyler” secretos cuba

Pinar del Rio, A School Walk. Illustration. Census of Cuba 1919

Montessori Kindergarten School, Seattle, Washington, 1900.Froebel Education

Very early in her life Guillermina fell in love with school.

> When the Americans reached Lajas they immediately opened a public school. Although I was less than four years old I was taken to be enrolled. They gave me a piece of paper so that I could go to the supply room to get notebooks, pencils, a

> primer and a pen. How I remember it! It was red and not very long with replaceable metal nibs. I guarded it for many years like a real treasure. School was a paradise for me from the start in spite of it not having furniture and there weren't enough benches without backs and the youngest had to sit on the floor. Although I knew how to read when we arrived in Sagua they sent me to the Kindergarten. All the teachers were Americans from the southern states and everything was in English. People thought it extraordinary that children be sent to school to play and sing but we enjoyed it enormously in spite of the fact that we understood nothing. It was very different from the K nowadays, it was the original Kindergarten of Froebel with "gifts" and activities, games and songs. When we arrived we stood in a circle painted on the floor, we sang the greeting and other songs and then we marched to work tables where the "gifts" were kept.These were boxes with geometrically shaped objects that we used to construct things; this is how we learned to distinguish cubes, cones, pyramids, etc.; after, we marched accompanied by the piano, and carrying our chairs we formed a circle. The first to get into the centre of the circle had the right to choose the game we would play. If a typically Cuban game was chosen the American teachers would have to hurriedly learn the music to accompany it but in this they were helped by the Cuban assistants. After this, we did the "occupations"–we would take the chairs again to the tables where we would work with clay, seeds, we would weave colored paper, etc. Following this we would, again, form a circle this time for the "Goodbye." Although it differed greatly from the contemporary educational thinking the K was a great thing. My observational skill and my manual dexterity stems, I think, from this initiation and later, when I was a teacher I could see the enormous difference between those children who had passed through the K and those who came directly from the home (I almost always taught Grade 1.)

In Santa Isabel de las Lajas and throughout the island, money and expertise were put into the school system so that the next generation of Cubans would grow up with democratic instincts. From their experience with acculturation of immigrants, Americans had a faith in education as the foundation of good citizenship. Methods that promoted independent judgement along with skills in collective decision-making, handiwork and problem solving replaced authoritarian teaching and rote learning as the means to create ideal Americans. Early childhood education was offered as part of settlement services in cities so that correct attitudes and instincts could be planted as early as possible in foreign minds.

Guillermina's Kindergarten experience in Santa Isabel de las Lajas illustrates the American belief in education as a formative civic influence.[21] Meantime, in Sagua, in 1892 a full decade before the American occupation, the school "El Mentor" was founded by an advocate of progressive education. Situated in #18 Estrella Street, its methods were promoted as "the most modern and based on the theories of illustrious educators Froebel and Pestalozzi."[22] Guillermina's prized

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[21] Epstein, Erwin H. "The Peril of Paternalism: The Imposition of Education on Cuba by the United States," *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Nov., 1987).

[22] http://saguaeducacion.tripod.com

pen, sent to the island even while the war raged, held the promise of post-war reconstruction through self-improvement and individual enterprise.

Sagua Teachers

The family's break with their old life as landed gentry and the decision to support themselves through teaching is marked by the move to Sagua, a shift from a small agricultural village to a commercial centre farther north but in the same province of Santa Clara. Known for its legends of pirate treasure hidden in nearby caves as well as its devastating annual floods followed by epidemics, Sagua was crossed by a river and surrounded by rich agricultural lands.[23]

Sagua Google Maps

Tour of Sagua Youtube

As detailed in Guillermina's memoires, between 1900 and 1910 two of her sisters, first Matilde, the eldest, and then, when she married, Hortensia, the middle sister, study, pass the exams and were appointed to a teaching position so becoming the family breadwinners. The youngest girl, Guillermina began her teaching career in 1914. But since by that time her mother had died and her sisters were married, she never had to renounce her income to meet the needs of the family. And, unlike her sisters who abandoned teaching after marriage, she would continue her studies in Education through post-graduate programs at the University of Havana and use this training to work as a school inspector, to instruct teachers in training at the Havana Normal School and to run her own school. Although the childhood roots of her vocation as an educator are a theme in her memoirs, the written reflections are more personal than professional. It was during this watershed period in Sagua when she is five to nineteen years old that her world view is formed through close observation of town, school and domestic life.

The cage of domestic labor and feminine elegance

As a little girl Guillermina was the family pet, admired for her intelligence and beauty. Consequently, she appears to have felt entitled to pleasure perhaps in a far greater measure than her sisters; even after the span of many years she describes, with indignation, the joyless atmosphere of her mother's tightly regimented household. She rejects her mother's need to

[23] http://meteoros.galeon.com/enlaces860847.html

control through never-ending household routines that denied her need for play, being instead made to sew after school and on weekends. She balks at her mother's austerity expressed in the cautionary lectures, "don't ruin it because it has to last" that came with the few gifts she was given. In short, Abuela felt robbed of her childhood and through her writing she attempts to exorcise the demons of her daughter-anger.

Once she became a grandmother, the stories she invented for us, her grandchildren, always had a strong moral focus and centred on a little girl struggling with poverty. My favourite of these opened with a girl doing the washing at the shore of a river. The bar of soap slips into the water and the girl is desolate, knowing that there is no money to replace it and that her mother will be in despair when she finds out. A fish half emerges from the water asking the girl why she is crying and upon hearing her story invites her to his underwater kingdom. The story follows with descriptions of the delights of the fish kingdom in which delectable food features strongly. Suddenly the little girl realizes that she is needed back on land. The fish king returns her to the shore with a box of new soap.

The story has a strong cultural flavour if one considers that in Cuba clean white clothing is the *sine qua non* of participation in society: it is the visible line separating the respectable from the socially outcast. The image of a little girl on the shore prevails in the island's folklore of rhymes, songs and games. The book *Folklore del Niño Cubano* includes this example.[24]

Dónde vas Adelaida querida
dónde vas, que tan triste te veo?
--Voy en busca del agua salada
y en el mar yo me voy a tirar.
Allá en el mar
dentro del agua
donde yo estuve
cerca de un mes
he visto peces
tan chiquitos como la punta
de un alfiler[25]

While she laments that her childhood was wasted on hemming, darning and embroidery *Abuela* cherished the way that the Montessori "gifts" developed her brain in concert with her hands. Her prejudice against domestic handiwork translated in a refusal to teach her daughter any form of similar skill. "On Saturdays there was the same sewing to do but there was more of it, what was not completed had to be done on Sunday. The outcome of this was that my own daughter grew

[24] Alzola, Teresa. *Folklore del Niño Cubano*, Tomo I: Formas Cantadas, (Santa Clara: Universidad Central de las Villas, 1961).93

[25] (Where are you going, dear Adelaida/Where are you going, looking so sad?/ I'm looking for saltwater/For I plan to throw myself into the sea./There in the sea/under the water/where I spent/almost a month/I saw fish/as tiny as the head of a pin/)

up not knowing how to do anything due to my determination that she would not suffer the kind of tyranny that I endured. In spite of all this I have always loved handiwork." Ironically, her daughter ultimately found her calling as a potter, the most engrossingly messy and tactile of all crafts.

Class Divisions and Female labor system in Sagua

In the earliest portrait of Guillermina, circa 1900, her determination is visible in the set expression on her round face and the tension of the fist that is meant to be gracefully supporting her head. She carries a fan and leans on the back of a wicker chair of elaborate Victorian design. The sea, a painted backdrop, can be glimpsed behind.

Guillermina gives a vivid setting to the story of childhood and adolescence, a turn of the century Cuban provincial town when innovations such as electricity, running water, and moving pictures are becoming common. Through descriptions of the visit protocol, public rituals such as the park promenade and glimpses of servants' lives, she represents the class divisions, race relations and social dynamics that pervade Sagua. Her fascination however is with the invisible but elaborate economy of women's labor. The exchange of free work for the development of skill and status for a black girl, the division of housework by specialization, the break-down of schedules so that women could perform domestic work both outside and inside their own home, the conception of skilled needle work for personal adornment as a distinct order of labor that was not degrading, all of these are documented with a keen understanding of the emotional and economic currency that they represent.

The second sister Rosita, fourteen years older than Guillermina, and much attached to her as her godmother, in 1903 is the first married and leaves the family to live in Cienfuegos.The eldest, Matilde, is the second to marry; she does this and dies from childbirth in 1905. After Matilde marries, the fourth daughter Hortensia is up at bat for the teaching position, which she secures as soon as she turns sixteen, the minimum teaching age; she in turn resigns to marry in time for sixth daughter Guillermina to take-over in 1913. Lilí and Ñiquita do not appear to be seen as candidates for teaching, perhaps because their birth-order makes it unnecessary since an older sister would already have been employed.

In her memoirs Guillermina describes the weekly hair washing routine in detail: her mother lovingly pours water on the dark locks as they cascade over the side of the table where Abuela lays, face-up, seemingly usurped by her hair as the love-object of her mother. It is no wonder that she rejoices when the doctor orders that it be cut off after it becomes tangled as she tosses in bed with fever one day after a hair-washing. Her tangling of the trophy head of hair is the one expression of rebellion she is permitted since it was a caused by fever.

A Family of Females

The three sisters that stand out in Guillermina's life are: Rosita, for having served as a surrogate mother, Hortensia, who served as her teacher-trainer and briefly replaced her mother during the kinder gentler reign after her death, and Antonia (Ñiquita). The latter is portrayed as sweet-tempered and generous in contrast to, by her own admission, Abuela's overbearing personality and quick temper. The two sisters were closest in age and had the most enduring relationship,

which survived Ñiquita's move to New York during the early years of her marriage. Lola O'Reilly Fornes, the grand-daughter of Ñiquita, is the sole descendant of the Bonet family that I have met.

The family's matriarchal focus continues after the widow dies in 1913, for Hortensia takes over the care of the youngest, Samuel, who is an adolescent and continues to look after and prepare Guillermina to become a teacher. When Hortensia marries, Ñiquita's husband is invited into the household to serve as a male protector. Although not expressed in so many words, according to Abuela this young man's authority is a token of the patriarchy and a total sham.

After Guillermina leaves Sagua the maternal gravitational force takes the form of her Aunt Lola who has moved to Havana. Since the story in the steno pad trails off around 1919 there is no mention of the years when Abuela worked as a teacher in the countryside, travelling regularly first to Santa Clara for her Bachelors' degree exams and later to Havana for the graduate studies exams. There, through her cousin's marriage to Agustin Batista, she meets the latter's brother whom she will marry.

A bitter memory of male betrayal colours Guillermina's early adulthood. Not referenced in her written remembrances, this piece of family oral history was that a suitable man courted her, an attachment was formed and he proposed only to be exposed sometime later as already married. The expression was that she had been "left at the altar" but likely this was a figurative rather than an objective description of the humiliation. The point of the handed-down story was that there was some essential life experience at the root of Guillermina's long-held, even nourished, resentment and that this explained her domineering personality.

Guillermina Villareal y Bonet, Sagua la Grande. circa 1916

She came early to the conviction that women survived and prospered through personal initiative. In a wider sense, having witnessed the suffering that was part of the struggle for independence she felt a stake in the new nation and an awareness that she could contribute in its evolution. Guillermina began to teach the year that a regulation was passed by the Secretary of Public Instruction that explicitly called for patriotic education in the classroom in order to develop "love of country" and "to form habits in children that facilitate the carrying out of their political and civic duties." To accomplish this, students were taught to love flag and country, study Cuban history and Cuban poets, and sing the national anthem.[26] A cherished memento of hers was a Cuban flag that had been flown in the earliest moments of Independence; it was a token of the political passage in which she had participated.

Education and American Democracy; Education and Cuban Nationalism

It was a propitious moment for the profession both in Cuba and North America: education, it was felt, could transform society. Accordingly the American administration during the occupation gave priority to reforming the education system and implementing a new, American model of administration and practice. This involved eliminating long-held practices that were corrupt, as they were disastrous for the quality of education. Traditionally teachers were appointed by municipal politicians usually on the basis of politics and/or bribery. Needless to say, since the Spanish had a lock on political power the majority of teachers were Spanish. The school building was the responsibility of the teacher, who often pocketed the money designated for rent and maintenance.

The American administration, in routing patronage and corruption in local government, took aim at the education system. An exam-based system of teacher appointment replaced the former Spanish colonial tradition of awarding teaching posts as patronage. Teacher's salaries were based on their American counterparts. Guillermina, therefore, would have had a sudden and dramatic increase in her standard of living when she began to teach in 1914.

Guillermina's training was influenced by the educational techniques and values promoted by the American administration but she, like many Cubans, appreciated these because they mirrored the beliefs of nationalist martyr, reformer and writer Jose Martí. Erwin Epstein in his study of the American education reforms points out that there was already a strong belief in their importance because it was a central to Martí's vision for the new Cuba: "Martí had died several years before the American occupation, but his views remained influential. He advocated universal compulsory schooling and favored practical, utilitarian instruction over classical education. He urged that the church be disassociated from public education in regard to both content and administrative structure. And he argued that great effort should be expended in securing an adequate force of teachers. Above all, he believed in the almost mystical power of education to benefit every individual."[27]

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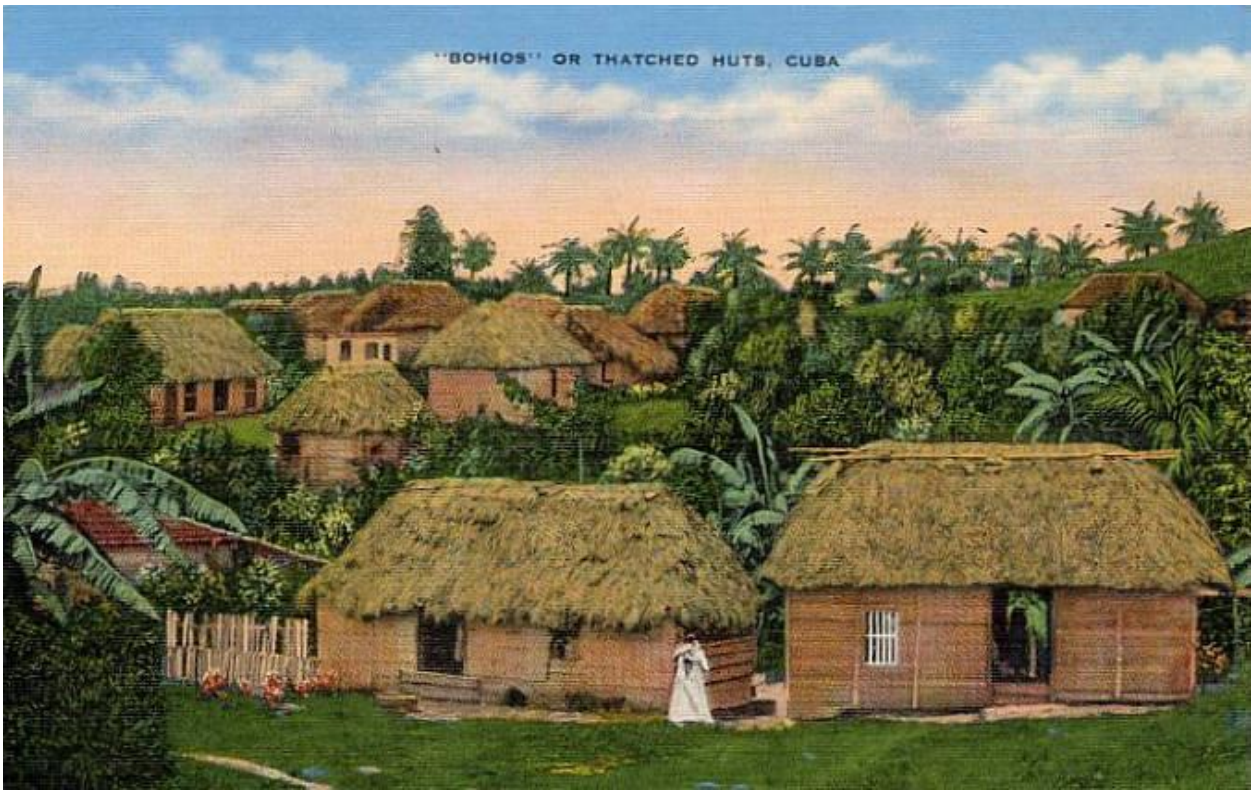
[26] Johnston, Laurie. "Education in Cuba Libre, 1889-1959, *History Today* 45, 8, (August 1995) 28

[27] Epstein

Textbooks supplied by the Americans continued in use long after the governments of occupation. These were translated into Spanish without any further modification. One of my memories of Guillermina when she was teaching me English was the simple drawings she made to illustrate the meaning of the word written below. The symbol drawing for house was an outline of a "bohio," a thatched home of a Cuban peasant, with a palm tree on the side. As a child this puzzled me since it bore little resemblance to the houses of my urban experience. I suspect that Guillermina's drawing was a graphic echo from her earliest teaching days when she would have needed to represent "house" in the experience of her Cuban rural students, so compensating for the cultural bias of the imported schoolbooks.



"Bohios" or Thatched Huts, postcard, ca. 1940. Vintage Postcard Dealer

Rural Teacher

Guillermina married late in life; the first phase of her adult life was spent in villages and the *centrales*, sugar mills, where school was crucial to the community. The family anecdote that portrays her studying by lamplight exposes her determination to advance out of these circumstances.[28] The fact that electricity was available only during hours of work and early

[28] "Guillermina was working in Las Villas, first as a teacher then as a school inspector in positions obtained through her uncle Laureano Falla. This was during the years 1911-1925. She worked in different regions. She studied for her Bachelor's independently, by correspondence. She studied by candlelight because the electricity was turned off at

evening indicates that the cultural life of these isolated places was severely limited. Her connection to the Falla family may have meant that she had access to the life of the plantation home or more elegant homes, or then again, her status may have been equivalent to the professional staff of the mill, accommodated near the workers' barracks. As a district superintendant she became familiar with some of the most remote parts of the province as she rode on mule into zones where no roads penetrated, to examine students and check the status of the schools. But, in essence, like Jorge, Guillermina through her ambition and intellectual curiosity belonged to an urban world and she must have dreamt of the day when she could abandon her provincial environment.

Dressing for Independence

Guillermina's involvement with the details of female clothing at the beginning of the last century was the direct result of her mother's genteel appearance production studio. Through long hours of sewing the widow and her daughters created a fashionable outer shell so that the family, could, at least superficially, maintain their social rank. And so, Abuela came to an early appreciation not only the technical skill and material detail behind the construction of feminine identity but as seen in her battle to rid herself of her hair, a material for painful braiding and sculpting by her mother, to view the exercise of fashion with detached and ironic wonder.

The imperative to follow the social rules of dress ran counter to Guillermina's natural, sensual love of clothes. In her reminiscences she rants against the code of mourning dress, identifying the need to conform to social convention as the root of the oppressive sadness that has stunted her development. Even as an infant she was clothed in black, not only because the family was in mourning for the loss of her father but also because this fabric colour hid wear better than any other.

Significantly, the only photographs that Abuela took away from Sagua are studio portraits where she poses flirtatiously in stylish dresses or alluring carnival costumes. Almost ten years after leaving the town, she again posed alone, this time regal in her long, white wedding dress holding Calla lilies as though she is at the triumphant crowning of her self-constructed, elegant ideal. This is as far as she could get from her black gowned infancy.

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ten o'clock in the evening and took her examinations in Santa Clara." Teresita Batista Casas (*Guillermina estaba trabajando en Las Villas primero de maestra despues de inspectora en puestos conseguidos atravez de Laureano Falla, su tio. Esto fue entre los anos 1911-1925. Trabajó en muchos lugares, estudió Bachillerato en esos años sola. Estudiaba "a la luz de la candela" y la examinaban en Santa Clara. Las luces se apagaban a las diez y estudiaba con vela*.)

Guillermina Villareal y Bonet, Sagua la Grande, circa 1918.

In my grandmother's account of her life she emerges, after the death of her mother, from the emotional poverty and material struggle of her early years to come of age teaching her first class and attending her first dance. She gives the date of these events as, respectively, May 20, 1913 and May 20, 1914. The twentieth of May is the *Dia de la Independencia* (Independence Day) based on the day in 1902 when Cuba formally became a republic. Equating the date of two personal inaugurations with that of the national holiday reveals the degree to which her own rite of passage to adulthood was inseparable in Abuela's mind from that of her nation.

Guillermina Villareal y Bonet. Wedding portrait, Havana. 1929

Guillermina dramatized her struggle to assert herself in her teens by recounting two conflicts, one with elder sister Lili over the need to wear mourning black to her first dance after the death of a distant relative. The second conflict was with Miguel, the new husband of her sister Ñiquita, who had, despite her new financial independence, entered the household to assume authority.

Teresa Casas Batista

The man she chose as a spouse many years later would not force her to adjust her personality, compromise her values or curb her independence.

Havana: Guillermina merges with the Falla-Batista network during Machado regime

Teresita Batista's story of the meeting and marriage of her mother and father begins with a mention of that pivotal family, the Falla's: "Laureano Falla and Dolores (Lola) Bonet had four children, Isabelita, Lala, Maria Teresa and Eutimio. … (Guillermina) went to Havana to study for her PhD in Pedagogy. Typically, students lived in boarding houses but she stayed in Lola's home. She was very close with Maria Teresa and Isabelita also who lived in the same home. In those years Agustín Batista became engaged to Maria Teresa and, in 1929, Jorge and Guillermina also were engaged. They were married in the chapel of Torrecilla, one of the family's sugar mills."[29]

One of the few photographs that show Jorge and Guillermina together was taken on the occasion of the announcement of their engagement on the 11th of June, 1929.[30] The setting is Julia and Melchor Batista's home at B and 13 Streets. Guillermina is 34 years old and Jorge is 40. Visiting and taking part in the celebration is Victor and his wife, Esther del Pino, as well as Maria Antonia and Ernesto, his wife Mary and some of their children, Consuelo or Enriqueta, is at the edge of the group on the right.

[29] *Laureano Falla y Dolores Bonet tuvieron cuatro hijos, Isabelita, Lala, María Teresa y Eutimio. Después se dedico a ir a La Habana a estudiar pedagogía (el doctorado). Lo que hacían los estudiantes era vivir en casa de huéspedes; ella vivió en casa de Lola. María Teresa y ella eran íntima, Isabelita vivía en la casa. En esos años se comprometió Agustín Batista con María Teresa y también al año siguiente se comprometieron Jorge y Guillermina—a fines de 1929. Se casaron en la capilla de Torrecilla, un ingenio de la familia…*

[30] *El 14 de Diciembre se casaron en la capilla de Torrecillo, Jorge y Guillermina que pusieron casa en un pisito de la calle M no. 48.* (They were married the 14th of December the same year in the chapel of Torrecilla and took up residence in a small apartment at No. 48 M Street. Batista, Julia, unpublished memoires

Left to right: Ernesto Batista, Mary Heydrich Batista, unidentified boy, Jorge, Maria Antonia Batista (seated), Guillermina, Victor, Julia (seated with a daughter of Maria Antonia), Esther del Pino and Consuelo or Enriqueta

Jorge and Guillermina's married life was coloured by the political turmoil and economic depression of the 1930's. Teresita, the first and only child was born in 1930 after a protracted labor. Although Guillermina was an atheist, the baby was named for the saint[31] that interceded in her drawn-out birth when called to do so by her female Catholic relatives. The arrival of Teresita changed the dynamic of the couple. Jorge was pushed to an outer orbit by the centrifugal mother-daughter energy as Guillermina set out to give her daughter the exemplary childhood that she had been denied.

[31] SaintThérèse of Lisieux

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Chapter 10 Mendoza Expansion: Branching Out in Republican Havana

Post-war financial hardship for the Batista family

In the summer of 1900 American ladies were seen risking the yellow fever that lurked in the narrow streets of old Havana for the thrill of picking through the pawnshops. The hunt was for bargain-priced heirlooms that Cuban women had been forced to exchange for cash. However, already by then, the pickings were slim, the real finds having been made during the period of greatest desperation during the war. As noted in *The New York Times*, "…the shops have been pretty well canvassed by hundreds…who took away the choicest things. The first comers found some handsome diamonds in antique settings at nominal prices, but these are all gone too."[32]

For the Batista Mendoza family, Melchor's inability to work meant that Julia struggled to cover living expenses with her father's monthly allowance. Extra expenses such as First Communion dresses and gifts presented a dilemma. Maria Antonia, in a postscript to her mother's journal describes how Julia was forced to pawn a valued gift in order to buy her an appropriate dress.

> When we were young, … around 97 and 96, she had much to endure; she would tell me that to cover the costs of my First Communion she sold a white lace mantilla that had been a gift of Mario Carrizosa so that she could pay "la Francia" [a store] and, although she begged them not to, Felicia and Fefita [her sister and sister-in-law] without realizing how this put her in a difficult situation, would pressure "la Echáneriz" [a teacher of the Sagrado Corazon school] to have the girls wear dresses with wide embroidered sashes, as they were then used. … Living with her sisters, who had much more money than she had, put her in an awkward position. While Grandmother was alive, being aware of these differences she would give us dresses but after she died and Papa went to New York without being able to work my mother passed through some very bitter moments.[33]

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[32] Stanhope, Dorothy. "Havana's Dry Goods Stores", *The New York Times,* July 29, 1900

[33] Maria Antonia: *Siendo nosotras chiquitas antes de la guerra en el 97 y 96 tuvo ella mucho que aguantar; me contaba que para los gastos de mi 1era Comunión vendió una mantilla blanca que le había regalado Mario Carrizosa para poder pagar en "la Francia" y por más que ella suplicaba Felicia y Fefita sin darles cuenta de sus estrecheses, animaban a la Echáneriz para que los vestidos llevaran tiras bordadas anchas, caras, como se usaban entonces. … viviendo entre sus hermanas y cuñadas todas con mucho más recursos mientras Abuelita vivió como mujer al fin se daba cuenta de estas diferencias y nos regalaba vestidos pero después que ella faltó y Papa se fue a N. York sin poder trabajar, cuántas armarguras pasaría...* from Appendix note in Julia Batista unpublished memoires

In 1902 a photographic group portrait was taken of Don Antonio surrounded by his grown children and their spouses. Reproduced in the family edition of his daughter Julia's memoirs, it shows the family posed formally and framed by the grand scale of a salon in their home on Amargura Street replete with oil paintings, chandelier and patterned marble floor. According to Teresita Batista, in the background hanging in an oval frame on the wall is the portrait of Micaela Montalvo de Pedroso along with those of other, indiscernible, ancestors. Don Antonio, a widower for seven years, looks frail and contemplative in his customary black suit. The group portrait marks the completion of a carefully composed network, for his children have chosen spouses of equally eminent families. Victor, the exception, remains a bachelor through his life. The members of the Mendoza clan, still within the orbit of the patriarch, look solemnly toward the photographer. Four years later the group will break apart, each branch of the family going its separate way.

Death of the patriarch, dispersal of family; financial and values differences among its branches lead to divergent lifestyles

"Academia de La Salle", 1915-1923, Aguiar 108 ½ , viewed from the monastery of San Francisco, University of Miami, Cuban Heritage Collection, Collection Note: "Fachada de la casa de Aguiar 108 ½ , entre las calles de Amargura y Teniente Rey, que fue residencia del abogado Ramírez de Arellano, ocupada por la academia De La Salle de 1915 a 1923, fecha en que se instalo en ella el Museo Nacional en la que permaneció hasta que se construyo el Palacio de Bellas Artes en terrenos que fueron de la Plaza del Polvorín.
Academia de La Salle, 1915

Don Antonio died after a brief cold in January of 1906. At this point his children and their families moved out of Amargura with the exception of Gonzalo Aróstegui whose medical practice and enormous library made de-installing a more difficult proposition. Maria Antonia Mendoza and Jose Ramirez de Arellano had, even before 1906, been the first to leave, needing larger quarters by virtue of their dozen-plus children. Their home on 4 Tejadillo Street was located several doors from the Sagrado Corazon School. [34]When the Aróstegui Mendoza branch of the family left Amargura in 1915, it was temporarily loaned to the Christian Brother's to

[34] del Río, Natalia. *Vértigo del Tiempo, Memorias de Nena Aróstegui,* (Habana: Ediciones Boloña, 2006)

establish the Academia de La Salle in Havana.[35] Don Antonio's preference for secular education for boys in the family was no longer relevant, and the Mendoza sons from that point on were sent to this religious school. The Colegio Sagrado Corazon's religious discipline had, for decades, shaped the Mendoza girls; now Academia De La Salle would do the same for their brothers.[36]

By the 1920s the Brothers' new school building was completed in El Vedado, and the school life and its neighbourhood becomes the focal point of the Mendoza families. Cousins remain closely linked through their attendance at the same schools and family celebrations. However, now clubs for the well-to-do expanded their network beyond the select old families that had been the preferred visitors to Amargura.

Cuba en 1925, Susini *El Cigarro Sin Rival* Album for souvenir pictures enclosed in tobacco products. Images of politicians, buildings, and places of interest of the six Cuban provinces in 1925. detail p. 21. Colegio de La Salle El Vedado postalita

[35] According to Nena Aróstegui. Amargura was again in 1923, used as a temporary facility for a large institution. This time the tenant was the Museo Nacional that headquartered there until their collection could be moved into the newly constructed Museo de Bellas Artes. del Rio

[36] However, compared to the excellent academic preparation the Mendoza boys received at La Salle, Sagrado Corazon before the 1920s focused exclusively on religious training, literature and domestic arts. del Río, 86

Leaving the colonial core of the city the grown sons and daughters of Don Antonio were at last able express their individuality in their own homes. For Julia, there was less pressure to keep up the appearances required by living under the same roof with her better-off relations. Claudio, who headed the Mendoza law firm after the death of his father, in a large suburban residence, continued his tradition of presiding over an intergenerational family compound.

Nena Aróstegui mentions that her grandfather, Don Antonio kept a strict watch over the courtship of his children. While the severe etiquette of Amargura (no laughing, no joking, always address elders with the formal 'usted') loosened somewhat under the influence of his many grandchildren, nevertheless the strict monitoring of family connections remained. His habit was to personally assure that all of his grandchildren's potential suitors belonged to "good" families.[37]

Unlike their parents who had long submitted to the formality and strictures of Amargura, the young adult grandchildren of Don Antonio had more options. Freedom came in the form of cars, clubs and access to the city's vibrant cultural and social life. While most of the Mendoza girls were not trained for any official economic role, at least one of them, Nena Aróstegui, was forced to cast aside family pride and find a job due to the absence of her husband early in their married life. Certain branches of the family were not safe from the period's rapid downward economic mobility that affected all of Cuban society. Some members would be more deeply involved in and benefit from the feverish expansion of the economy while others became more dependent on their more successful relatives.

The discrepancies in values and income among family members led naturally to the loosening of the bonds of Amargura. As Don Antonio's grandchildren responded in contrasting ways to the political and economic crises, the consummate solidarity within the colonial mansion receded in memory.

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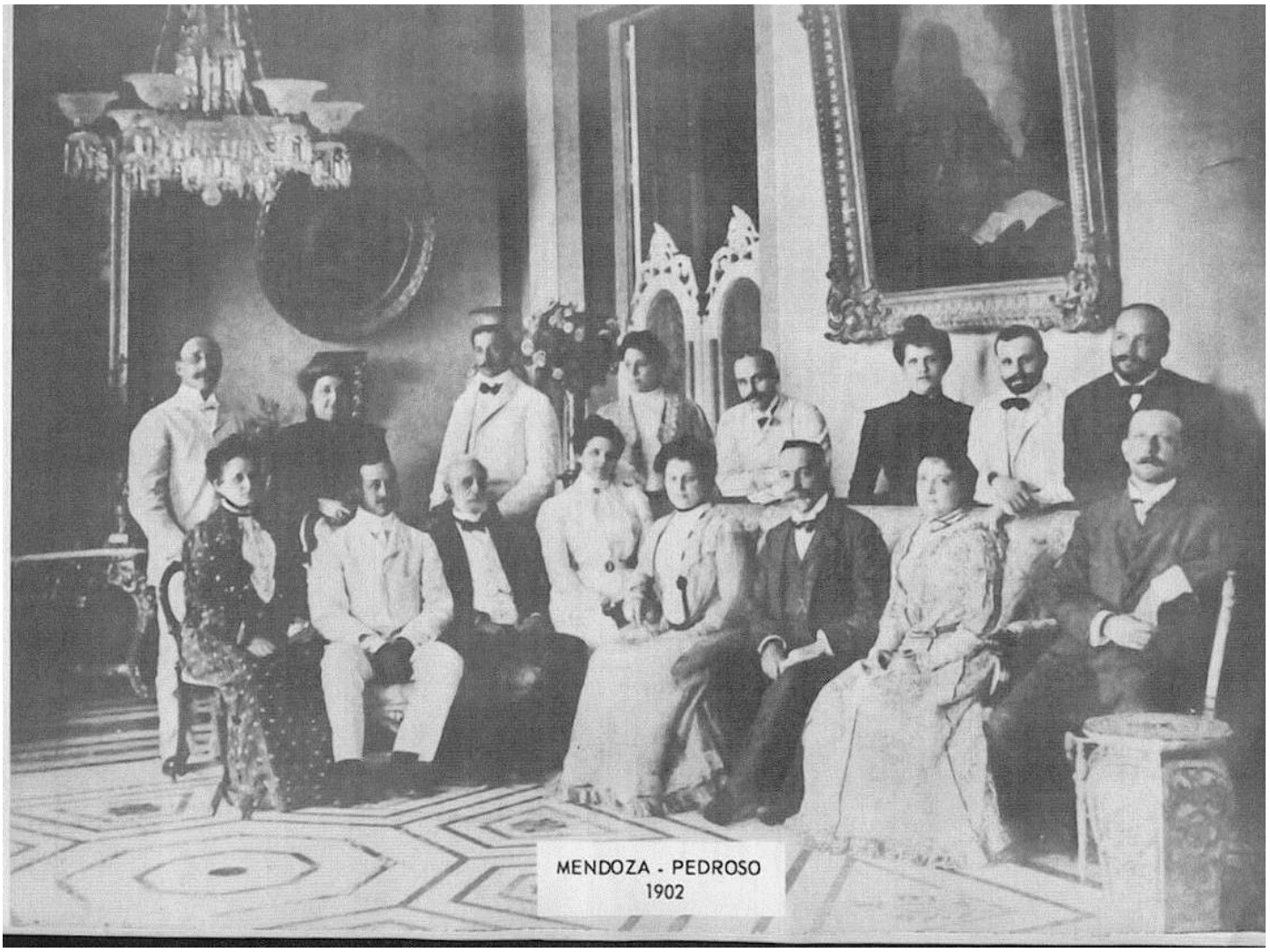
[37] Nena Arostegui: *Yo no sé como todo el mundo no se quedo soltero en la casa, que era, indiscutiblemente, una ciudadela en todos los sentidos, y si difícil nos era salir de ella a los que estábamos dentro, mucho mas difícil nos era salir de ella a los que estábamos dentro, mucho mas difícil les resultaba a los de afuera poder entrar. Para que una persona entrase en casa de abuelito había que conocer la historia de su familia. Que venia uno de los muchachos o muchachas y decía:–Juanito va a traer un amigo. –Y quien es ese amigo?–Se llama Pablito.–Pero de quien es hijo Pablito? –De Fulano de tal. –Ah, bueno que venga.Y aquel visto bueno queria decire que se conocia no solo a Fulano de tal, sino tambien a sus padres, a sus abuelos y a sus bisabuelos.* del Rio:37-8



Standing from left to right: Miguel, Pepita Montalvo (de Miguel), Ramón, Felicia (de Arostegui), Pablo, Mariana de la Torre (de Ramón), Claudio, Jose Maria Arellanos. Seated: Julia (de Batista) Victor, D. Antonio, Paulette (de Pablo) Ma. Antonia (de Arellano) Gonzalo Arostegui, Maria Teresa Freyre (de Claudio) Melchor Batista.

The Batista's as a nuclear family in El Vedado

Batista Gonzalez de Mendoza family, ca. 1903. Julia stands in background, closest to the door.

We have only one portrait of Julia and her children and its informality makes for a striking contrast with the formality of the Mendoza group portrait taken in the same years.

The photograph was likely taken in 1903. Julia and her children are on the steps of a house with a columned portico typical of large homes of El Vedado. They would have been still living in Amargura, but it was perhaps taken in a rented house where the family would spend the hottest and most pestilential months of the summer. Early in the 20th century the district would have been ringing with the sounds of construction as residences sprouted up, completing the plan for this zone initially subdivided in 1858 yet delayed in its development by the wars of independence. [38]

El Vedado was where the family and friends of the Batista's were settling year-round, swelling membership at the neighbourhood's schools clubs and churches. (Follow link Baedeker Map

[38] Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula. *Havana Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2002) 56

(Havana and Environs 1909) It was laid out on a grid plan with major thoroughfares creating new axes of orientation for the city as a whole. With its large lots, a specification for houses to be set back at considerable distance from the street, and tree-bordered sidewalks, it was a striking visual contrast to the density of the colonial core. El Vedado reflected the principles of the Garden City that offered a leisure-oriented life where each nuclear family could relish its privacy removed from the noise, frenetic commerce and life of the street. The new homes responded to the surrounding urban design; notably narrower parcels of property and gardens resulted in the replacement of the traditional courtyard with an indoor patio enclosed on only three sides. A ventilation shaft 'patinejo' compensated for the loss of light and ventilation that the courtyard traditionally provided.[39]

"Residences in El Vedado", ca. 1900 cuba secretos

Focusing on the details of the candid snapshot of the Batistas one can see that this is not a posed group portrait but a snapshot of the reaction to a spontaneous bit of clowning. Most of the children are laughing as they look at Julio at the edge of the picture. He is the eldest son, the only

[39] Cristina Amoruso and Orestes del Castillo, "Life and Death of the Courtyard House Migration, Metissage and Assasination of a Typology" http://www.periferia.org/publications/patiohouse.html (Accessed 29 July 2012)

one in men's clothing. He holds himself rigid and lifts his chin moving a stick like a musical or military baton that registers as a blur in the photograph. Still in his teens, before his assembled siblings, he breaks out in a parody of a puffed-up, self-important man. Matilde sits on the top step, in the centre, holding one of the babies and Adolfina leans against the column near her mother who is in the background. Both girls are in their teens, in the last years of their secondary schooling and perhaps have already decided to enter the Sacred Heart order. The baby held by Matilde must be Consuelo. Julia is pregnant; Enriqueta, not yet born, would be the last of fourteen children in twenty years. She has successfully cared for them collectively and individually through difficult pregnancies and deliveries, plagues and war and often without the presence of Melchor. Is he on the other side of the camera?

The tribulations of Julia: Jorge's inner ear operations; Manuel's death from appendicitis; Melchor's depression

Stranded in the centre of the laughing group and staring straight at the lens is an adolescent boy wearing short pants and a dark jacket. This is Jorge. He had suffered an injury or a fever in his early childhood that affected his inner ear and had lived with the effects, perhaps a loss of hearing and probably considerable pain, for some years. Seemingly disconnected from the moment he seems unaware of the incident at the edge of the scene.

By 1905, when he was sixteen, the pain had become unendurable. He was taken by Julia to consult an ear, nose and throat specialist at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. The diagnosis was mastoiditis, a middle ear infection, and immediate surgery was recommended. The procedure involved general anaesthetic in the form of ether, the removal of part of the mastoid bone behind the ear, and the trepanation of the septic area. It was carried out to prevent the infection from reaching the brain; however, the surgery itself was often the cause of a new infection. Jorge suffered just such a complication, with fevers and cerebral haemorrhages shortly after the operation.[40]

Operating Room Rosevelt Hospital 1900, New York City, 1900, Library of Congress

[40] Julia Batista

In the meantime, Julia's ten year old son Manuel died in Havana during an emergency appendicitis operation. In New York with Jorge, a grief-stricken Julia was unable to return because he required a second operation. This time the appointed surgeon was Dr. Edward Dench who, earlier that year, had assisted with the procedure on the inventor Thomas Edison.[41] A further trepanation followed to clear all traces of the infection but Jorge had fevers and convulsions and was left an epileptic. Julio came to offer support, sent by his father, and he assisted at the second operation. Julia returned to Havana in September, leaving Jorge convalescing in New York. Back in Havana Julia was called again to a bedside, for Melchor required nursing for an undisclosed illness.[42] In the summer of 1906 Julia, Melchor and their children moved out of Amargura into the first of what would be a long series of rented homes in El Vedado. Jorge returned that spring to New York for follow-up examinations. The residual effects of the operation would continue to affect him. As an engineer he suffered injuries likely due to his having a seizure while working in highly mechanised environments. Ultimately, a cerebral haemorrhage at the age of 48 caused his death.

El Vedado, grand boulevards and show-architecture celebrate new wealth and the financial vitality of the new republic

Aspects of Jorge's early life can be glimpsed in the memoir of a cousin six years younger than him who lived alongside him in Amargura. Maria Teresa "Nena" Aróstegui recollects when the sense of the city was transformed, not only by the extended public transit but also by the introduction of cars. This had implications for the social life of her older female cousins who, at the turn of the century, were entering society.

> No longer is Margarita the only young lady in the house. Now there are five of them: her, Merceditas, Micaela, Matilde and Carmen. In other words four of my cousins and one of my sisters has reached the age of seventeen, the age at which young ladies enter their social life and wear the full-length dress of a woman. ... As if in a sepia-tinted photo I can see the five of them in conversation, which means it's already after five in the afternoon, for this kind of leisurely activity is only permitted after that hour. Before five everyone has to be busy: the children, adolescents and young ladies studying, the women, if they have nothing else to do knitting or embroidery, and the men working. What a pleasant memory to imagine the young ladies and their possible topics of conversation. Maybe one of them mentions that the streetcar line now goes all the way to Marianao, and another remarks that Enrique Conill Rafescas, the husband of Lila Hidalgo, has brought from New York a car that can do speeds up to 60 miles an hour.
>
> --How much is that in kilometers?

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[41] "Dangerous Operation on Thomas A. Edison, Surgeons Remove Mastoid Abscess Near the Inventor's Ear" *The New York* Times, January 24, 1905

[42] Julia Batista

> --About 90?
>
> --What a fright! How fast is uncle's?
>
> --I don't know. The only thing I know about automobiles is that they make a terrible noise and after fifteen minutes riding in one, no matter how well you're wrapped in a duster, even your soul is covered in dust.[43]

During Antonio and Chea's time, there had been a tradition of concerts and recitals at Amargura. After the patriarch's death *salones*, private dances became a more prominent part of the entertainments as the Aróstegui Mendoza children entered society. In 1916 they relocated to El Vedado close to the Avenida de los Presidentes, a thoroughfare that along with Paseo, Linea and Calle 23, define the district. The breadth of these boulevards, amplified visually by the five-metre set-back and four metre portal width requirement for houses, was further enhanced in its elegant scale by monuments and small parks.[44] The eclectic styles of villa, in contrast to the solid blocks of the colonial district, were made to be admired and appreciated from a distance and from a mobile vantage point on vehicles.

In 1916 Pablo Gonzalez de Mendoza commissioned leading Cuban architect Leonardo Morales Pedroso to design a luxury residence in El Vedado and, along with his brothers entrusted him also with the design of their new bank in "Little Wall Street" in the old city.[45] Eight years later, Eugenio Batista, as a recently graduated architect was invited by Morales to accompany him on a tour of Europe.[46] Eugenio's letters home providing commentary on his 'grand tour' reflects the

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[43] Nena Arótegui: Como en una postal antigua, me parece ver a las cinco muchachas conversando, lo que significaría que ya son más de las cinco de la tarde, pues solo a partir de esa hora se permiten en la casa el esparcimiento o la ociosidad. Antes de las cinco, todo el mundo tiene que estar ocupado: los niños, los jóvenes y las muchachitas, estudiando; las mujeres, si no tienen otra cosa que hacer, tejiendo o bordando, y los hombres trabajando. primas y una de mis hermanas tienen cumplidos ya los diecisiete años. En esta época de ellas es…cuando las muchachas comienzan a hacer vida social, salir o a vestirse de largo…

Ya no es Margarita la única muchacha de la casa. Ahora son cinco: ella, Merceditas, Micaela, Matilde y Carmen. Es decir, cuatro de mis primas. Qué bonito recordarlas así, y qué bonito imaginar sus posibles temas de conversación. Talvez, una dice algo relacionado con la reciente extensión de la línea del tranvía hasta Marianao, y otra que Enrique Conill Rafecas, esposo de Lila Hidalgo, ha traído de Nueva York un automóvil que corre a razón de 60 millas por hora. --Y cuanto es eso en kilómetros?--Como 90?--Ay, que espanto. Cuanto corre el de tío?--Pues no se. Lo único que yo se de automóviles es que hacen un ruido terrible y que a los quince minutos de estar montada en uno, por mucho guardapolvo que te pongas, ya tienes hasta el alma llena de polvo. 57

[44] Coyula, Scarpaci and Segre. 57

[45] "Leonardo Morales Pedroso"
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special%3ASearch&search=Leonardo+Morales+pedroso

[46] Julia Batista

Batista family's interest in art and architecture.[47] He joined the Morales architectural firm and, beginning in the 1930's was a leader in the call for a uniquely Cuban architecture.

Aerial View of El Vedado 1910-1930 University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection

El Vedado, grand boulevards and show-architecture celebrate new wealth and the financial vitality of the new republic

The strict regimen of her home and school meant that Nena's childhood world was bounded by Amargura and the Tejadillo Streets. She walked through the close colonial streets between these points every day accompanied by a servant. In contrast, the memories of the next chapter of her life are set in the stretches of space of El Vedado. An amateur athlete, Nena loved dancing, skating, swimming, biking, riding horses, and, above all, motoring. The expansive design of the newer western areas of the city was the natural setting for these activities.

Nena associated El Vedado not only with parks and boulevards but also with an infrastructure project that extended the design of the district across the Almendares River. This, an iron bridge spanning the river at Quinta Avenida and Calle 23, created a new horizon for residential subdivisions based on the modern leisure ideal and the existence of cars. She was proud to be related to the man behind the construction of the bridge who was in 1903 a founding member of the Cuban Automobile Association;[48] this suburban developer was none other than her Tío Ramon. I would hear family stories, of how, before my time, to attend weddings in Marianao one had to go on horseback and, because the bridge did not exist at that time, ferry across the river. All of the district of Marianao was farmland before my uncle Ramón, along with his wealthy

[47] Batista, Agustín, "Cartas de Viaje" unpublished travel letters 25

[48] Pérez, Louis A. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture***. (** UNC Press Books, 2007) 276

friends, made it into a residential development. He was accordingly named Adopted Son of Marianao by the town council and a street, the one that now passes by the Clínica Cira García, and is now called Avenida General Lázarao Cárdenas was named Avenida Ramón Mendoza in his honor. [49]

Puente elevadizo sobre el río Almendares, Miramar, postcard, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, Bridge Over Almendares, Miramar

Bridge Over Almendares Medios de Transporte Terrestre, Vimeo.

[49] Nena Aróstegui: Le oía contar a mi familia-no viví eso- que para ir a ver a las novias a Marianao, los jóvenes tenían que ir a caballo. Entences no existía el puente y había que cruzar en una balsa. Todo este reparto Miramar era una finca, después la urbanizó Ramón Mendoza, mi tío, con otros amigos de mucho dinero. A este tío lo nombraron Hijo Adoptivo de Marianao, en reunión del Ayuntamiento de esa población, y a fin de perpetuar semejante acuerdo resolvieron los ediles designar con el nombre Avenida Ramón Mendoza a un tramo de una carretera importante, esa que pasa por la Clínica Cira García, hoy llamada Avenida General Lázarao Cárdenas. del Río

Later, Nena's cousin, Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza, the eldest son of Miguel would also put his stamp on the western extensions of the city. Along with Pedro Pablo Kohly he established the subdivision of Alturas de Almendares in Marianao. [50]

secretos cuba

Calle 17 en el Vedado, Habana, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection,

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[50] Schwartz, Rosalie *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*, , (U of Nebraska Press, 1997) 37

Scarpaci ,Segre, Coyula, 54

Yacht Club 1920's, secretos cuba

Cars, Club Life, Dancing the liberating elements of the Generation of the 1920s

Before her marriage Nena's dual passions were dancing and driving. Her Tío Miguel supported her pursuit of these activities. As a dance patron and someone who loved to dance himself, Miguel Mendoza, although at the time well into his fifties, had the habit of hiring a professional known for the performance of a fashionable new dance style to instruct him along with the young

women in the family[51] He also gave Nena a car when she was a young lady about town. It is her claim that she was one of the first women to drive in Cuba.[52]

Nena en la calle G con uno de los primeros automóviles de su propiedad

illustration, *Vértigo del Tiempo, Memorias de Nena Aróstegui*

In contrast to the Nena's intense documentation of her whirlwind social and sporting life there is no mention of these types of activities in the lives of her Batista cousins. Her aunt, Julia, lists important family events yet there is no mention of any dance attended by any of her daughters. Of these, the two eldest at the time were Sacred Heart novices, however the two middle daughters Maria Antonia and Clemencia, contemporaries of Nena in the same school and extended family, likely would have attended at least some of the social events that Nena describes with such rapture. It could be that the sheer volume of these prevented any mention of

[51] *"…tuve la buena suerte de que a tío Miguel le había seducido siempre el baile y le seguía seduciendo a pesar de los cincuenta y tantos largos años que entonces tenía. Regularmente, cuando venía a la Habana, algún buen bailarín—o bailarina a veces—tío Miguel lo contrataba para que nos diese clases a un grupo de muchachas que invitaba, y a el también, desde luego."*dal Rio 93

[52] *"…tío Miguel …me regaló un Dodge o un Ford de bigotera, no recuerdo, cuando todavía era soltera, con lo que me convertí en una de las primeras mujeres que manejó en Cuba…"* dal Rio 35

them. Or, that Julia's more ascetic outlook made her place less value on them. The painful issue of the cost of dressing fashionably is alluded to only in the fact that in 1921 the expense of Maria Antonia's wedding wardrobe was covered by her uncles Victor, Miguel and Pablo. Within her journal of dates Julia does, however, include a copy of the Yacht Club newsletter article where her sons, the Batista brothers' are praised for their performance in a boating regatta.

The Mendoza cousins grew up in a tight knit social enclave, following the seasonal rhythms of boating, tennis and swimming at the clubs where the socially prominent families interacted and paired their children so as to procure the next generation of members. These notably included the Vedado Tennis Club (1913) whose members were so snobbish that they were mockingly called *los Marqueses* (the Marquises) by the Havana press or the most venerable Havana Yacht Club, founded in 1886 in which one had to be related to an existing member to join.[53]


Vimeo Regata en la Bahia de La Habana 1920s

Economic Disparity between Branches of the Mendoza family; the need for cash from 1906 sale of Santa Gertrudis due to Melchor's disability; the rise of the Sugar interests of the Miguel, Claudio and Victor Mendoza with the creation of a new model of mill; Law, Engineering and Architecture careers as spin-off of Mendoza enterprises in expanding economy

The year 1906 was a turning point in many ways for the Batista Mendoza family. Julia sold her share of Santa Gertrudis to her brother Ramon for $50,000. With this sale, the monthly allowance that had been forwarded during her father's lifetime was terminated. Maria Antonia, in writing a postscript to her mother's memoir delicately hints that the sale had not been in the latter's favour as she had demonstrated "discretion and magnanimity." The agreement to sell

[53]" In 1886 the Havana Yacht Club—the name was always in English—was founded by young creoles who had studied in the United States. The Yacht Club organized races, sponsored regattas and held swimming meets, all of them modeled on North American programs. Louis A. Perez, *On Becoming Cuban.* 75

might have been linked to the fact that Melchor, following the death of Manuel, sank into a severe and lengthy depression; unable to work he retreated to Camaguey. Years later at the time of Julia's death, Maria Antonia, remembered clearly that this had been a period of crisis for the family: "With respect to the notes you had asked from me about Mother I couldn't get down to writing them and I'll try to explain the reason for this. These are such intimate and personal aspects of the family that I would not like to see them published. For example, the tact and prudence that she showed when Father became so depressed in 1907-1908; her discretion and magnanimity with Ramon over the sale of Santa Gertrudis." An interpretation of this remark is that it was felt, in retrospect by her daughter, that if Julia had kept her share of the mill she would have enjoyed the bonanza of sugar profit during the years of the First World War.[54]

While most of the Batistas were locked out of direct profit, the majority of the sons and grandsons of Don Antonio benefitted from the booming war time sugar market. With the funds they acquired in 1916 from the sale of Santa Gertrudis to the American Sugar Company they built a colossus, a state of the art sugar mill that brought such profit that they were able to diversify into banking and real estate at a critical moment when the Cuban economy was at high gear and demand for real-estate at its peak. For in the first decades of the republic, when hard currency flooded back to the capital along with the exiles, it was largely invested in real estate.[55]

Although by the time of the 1916 sale of Santa Gertrudis, Julia was no longer directly profiting from the family sugar business, her sons enjoyed the benefit of their uncles' excellent entrepreneurship. They were educated and professionally trained to take full advantage of the modernisation linked to the American economic penetration of the island.

Overseeing political affairs, President Menocal's grasp of what was right for the country was intrinsically linked to his personal greed, and being deeply investment in one of the island's pre-eminent mills, he steered matters to enhance its profits. During his terms as president from 1913 to 1921, he used his office to increase the profitability of the Cuban American Sugar Corporation. [56] In contrast, the Mendoza businessmen stayed clear of political office and used American interests to build and consolidate not only their sugar investments but an increasingly diversified portfolio.

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[54] *Respecto a las notas que me pedías de Mamá no me decidí a escribirlas y trataré de explicar lo que me pasa. Son cosas tan íntimas y tan de familia que no me gusta se publiquen por e j. el tacto y la prudencia que desplegó cuando Papá se puso tan neurastémico en el 1907 y 1908; su discreción y su magnanimidad con Ramón cuando la venta de Sta Gertrudis*. Appendix Note to Julia Batista unpublished memoires

[55] Scarpaci, Segre, Coyula, 109

[56] "A millionaire businessman, Menocal believed that what was good for the Cuban-American Sugar Corporation would be good for Cuba. He was so rich himself that he hardly needed to be personally corrupt, yet he acquired more from the Cuban treasury than from Chaparra's sugar mills." Gott, Richard. *Cuba: a new history*. (Yale University Press, 2005) 126

Julia's eldest son, Julio, followed his uncles Claudio and Ramon into the Gonzalez de Mendoza law firm. Jorge, the second son, graduated from Cornell as an electrical engineer in 1914 at a period when it was generally understood that the future of the sugar mills in Cuba lay in electrification. Victor studied agriculture and managed one of the family's colonos. Ernesto and Eugenio became architects, enjoying the opportunities for commissions for unique homes in El Vedado, Miramar and Marianao. Agustín became a lawyer but left the Mendoza firm to assist in managing the business interests of his wife's family on the death of his father-in-law, Laureano Falla, in 1934.

Aróstegui Mendoza family, Felicia and Gonzalo, centre, Nena seated to Gonzalo's left, Arturo Bolivar, standing behind to her right. 1925

In her memoir Nena goes back to the early years of the century when her father would describe the noble lineage of the Aróstegui family and the royal decree that granted its members the unique privilege of entering churches on horseback. He spoke of this past with humour and detachment; devoted to his vast personal library, music and theatre, he identified with the rise of the cultured, republican Havana rather than the descent of the Cuban oligarchy. Nena, who loved driving cars and riding horses, as though circling back to recover the Aróstegui elevated and moving vantage point, in 1928 married a cavalry officer connected to the family of the nineteenth century military hero and liberator, Simon Bolivar.

Nena en traje de montar

illustration, *Vértigo del Tiempo, Memorias de Nena Aróstegui*

Five years after his wedding to Nena, Arturo Bolivar, along with over one hundred officers who like him were loyal to President Machado, took over the Hotel Nacional as a last-ditch attempt to force an American intervention and so topple the freshly established government. After serving a prison sentence for his part in the attempted coup, forced to retire his uniform forever, Bolivar opened a riding school in Marianao, one of the new residential zones west of the Almendares River. This personal demotion mirrored a larger cultural reality: the chivalric heroism that inspired a previous generation's participation in the war of independence and ushered in the first republic had vanished and been replaced by new models of warfare and revolution.

In the first decades of the twentieth century the new districts of Havana gave shape to the Mendozas' lifestyle. From their roots as an extended family in the mixed-use colonial core they branch out as nuclear families to El Vedado, a low-density residential zone dependent on streetcars and cars. Extending this equation across the Almendares River, the youngest, Ramon, finances an iron bridge, gateway to subdivisions and economic development on its western side. Ramon's son, Ignacio would add to the history of this symbolic gateway. As a young man he attempted to assassinate the president by planting a bomb in this very location.

Ignacio was a third generation Mendoza and so a member of the Cuban elite; a beneficiary of wealth that had been grown by his family by its canny adaptability and ability to side-step political entanglements. His father and uncles with an intimate understanding of the political and economic currents had used their cross-cultural expertise to create alliances with American business interests. It was a source of pride to Don Antonio's sons and grandsons that they had followed his example in maintaining an arm's length distance from politics. In a family known for its pragmatism what circumstances could have led a junior member to such a radical act?

The answer to this puzzle lies in the charged political climate of the 1920's. The nation's economic instability during that decade laid the groundwork for the consolidation of power by a dictator. The dramatic gesture of Don Antonio's grandson symbolized the discontent of a generation that in the new authoritarian political order felt keenly the betrayed promises of the new republic.

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Timeline

Abbreviations: b-birth m-marriage d-death

1856

m: Cristóbal Bonet (Cataluña) and Maria Adelaida Mora (Las Villas**)**

1860

(circa) b: Eduardo Casas y Salgado (Sada, Galicia)

1870s

b: Rita Bacallao y Coca (Placetas)

m: Rafael Rodriguez and Petronila de la Rosa (Cienfuegos)

b: Saturnino Rodríguez (Cienfuegos)

1873

Laureano Falla age 14 arrives from Cantabria, begins apprenticeship as merchant in Santa Isabel de las Lajas

1875

(circa) b: Eloisa Piloto del Valle, Pinar del Río (parents: Ricardo Piloto & Mercedes del Valle)

1878 *February 8*, Pact of Zanjón ends the Ten Years' War

1879

Laureano Falla moves to Cienfuegos begins to buy land for cattle raising, and tobacco, fruit and sugar cane cultivation

Eduardo Casas emigrates from Sada, La Coruña and begins to amass fortune from horse dealing and other business ventures

m: Mercedes del Valle and Ricardo Piloto (approximate date)

1881

m. Antonia Bonet with Julian Villareal

1882

An immigration initiative attracts a flood of Spaniards to Cuba

1886

Slavery is made illegal after transitional abolishment beginning in 1879

m. Rita Bacallao and Eduardo Casas (approximate date)

1889

m. Lola Bonet with Lareano Falla

1895

ddeclaration of war by rebels under the leadership of José Martí and General Máximo Gómez. The rebel forces invade the island in the west

Gomez calls for all plantations to the totally destroyed.

Ricardo Piloto takes family to Tampa then New York City. His wife, Mercedes del Valle is operated on for cervical cancer while in New York and dies during the operation.

b: Guillermina Villareal y Bonet (Santa Isabel de Las Lajas) March 7

Colonia Villareal, Santa Isabel de las Lajas is destroyed by fire

starting on Nov. 10, 1895, attacks on trains, together with the burning of bridges and other actions, coincided with Gomez and Maceo's operations in the Cienfuegos area

1896

General *Valeriano Weyler* announces the policy of re-concentration. Inhabitants living outside fortified areas are given eight days to move into the towns occupied by the Spanish troops. After that time, anyone caught outside the concentrated areas is to be considered an enemy sympathizer and killed.

Successful invasion campaign along the length of the Island by Cuban rebels lead by Antonio Maceo who controls Pinar del Rio and Maximo Gomez who attacks plantation-rich centre of the island; Maceo is killed on return east

1898

June 6th–10th Invasion of Guantánamo Bay American and Cuban forces invade the strategically and commercially important area of Guantanamo Bay 4 July naval battle in Santiago, American victory

Americans blockade the island; the Spanish General Weyler orders everyone leave the countryside and move to the towns; famine and plague ensue

December 10, Treaty of Peace in Paris ends the Spanish-American, Spain relinquishes sovereignty over Cuba.

d: Julian Villareal, age 60, after a long illness, leaving his widow impoverished, Antonia Bonet must support eight children ranging in age from three to 16 years

Americans reach Santa Isabel de las Lajas during the war and open a school Guillermina Villareal Bonet, not yet 4 attends; Lola Falla Bonet, living in Cienfuegos and married to a Laureano Falla, a Spanish merchant, helps the family survive by sending them food

b: Maria Teresa Falla y Bonet

1899

Island wide reforms to the education system launched by American administration

January 1, The Spanish colonial government withdraws and the last Captain General Alfonso Jimenez Castellano hands over power to the North American Military Governor, General John Brooke

1900

(ca.) Abuela's Bonet aunt, Otilia moves to Sagua, and invites Matilde, Abuela's eldest sister to come to live with her and prepare to qualify as a teacher there where the family is well-connected, being related to the town's founding fathers.

Matilde Villareal obtains teaching position in Sagua and the family rents what remains of their land, and house in Lajas and moves to Sagua la Grande in the north of the same province of Las Villas

m: Eloisa Piloto to Saturnino Rodriguez and Maria Piloto to Antonio Rodriguez

1901

b: Maria Cecilia Rodriguez y Piloto, Rodas (Santa Clara, las Villas) (July)

March 2, Platt Amendment passed in the U.S. stipulating the conditions for the withdrawal of United States troops and assuring U.S. control over Cuban affairs.

1902

May 20 The Cuban republic is instituted under the presidency of Tomas Estrada Palma

discovery that yellow fever is transmitted by a certain species of mosquito spurs wide-scale disinfection program

Building-boom in Havana as money placed in American bank accounts during the war is invested in real estate

1903

b: Enriqueta Batista (Julia declares family officially closed, this is the final birth in her "interminable series" of children: 14 in 20 years)

d: Celia Piloto, third daughter of Ricardo Piloto, influenza (approx. date)

1904

Hortensia Villareal replaces Matilde as family bread-winner, qualifying to teach in Sagua. Matilde marries and dies of childbirth in the same year.

1905

Julia Batista takes Jorge to ear specialist in NYC who operates for mastoiditis (middle ear infection) severe fever follows surgery making a second operation at the New York Eye and Ear Hospital (2nd Avenue at West 22nd) necessary. Julia remains 7 weeks with Jorge.

d: (July) Manuel Batista, aged 14, while Julia is in New York, during emergency operation for appendicitis in Havana

September-Melchor is ill and requires care in Havana Julia leaves Jorge with Julio in New York to return to Havana

1906

d: Antonio Gonzalez de Mendoza

Julia with Jorge to New York for consultations regarding recovery

The Batistas leave Amargura (July) to settle in El Vedado, Calle 5 between 4th and 6th

Julia sells her portion of Santa Gertrudis to Ramon for $50,000

September 29 Revolt against Tomás Estrada Palma is successful. Peace negotiated and U.S. troops reoccupy Cuba

October 13 Charles Magoon becomes U.S. governor of Cuba during second government of intervention

1907

Melchor, suffering from depression, goes to Camaguey to oversee his business interests there

1908

Julio Batista graduates as lawyer joins family firm

1910

January 28 Cuba returns to home rule. José Miguel Gómez of the Liberal Party becomes president

Guillermina Villareal notes appearance of Hailey's comet over Sagua "(that year) I turned 15 yet I was still a girl"

1913

President Menocal is elected president;

d. Antonia Bonet

Guillermina is granted her first teaching post. Ñiquita brings Miguel Fornes who she has married the previous year to live in the family house

1915

d. Adelaida Bonet Mora

d: Eloisa Piloto del Valle, leaving an infant Armando and 13-year-old Celia. Ricardo Piloto moves his family into "*el castillo*" ("the castle") the Beaux Arts mansion (19 and O)

1916

Pablo G. de Mendoza commissions Leonardo Morales to design and build a luxury home in El Vedado

The Aróstegui Mendoza family, the last to vacate Amargura, move into a home in El Vedado's Avenida de los Presidentes

1918

d: Eduardo Casas Salgado, (heart disease) before his death he appoints his close friend Ricardo Piloto, to manage the fortune he leaves to his wife and sons. (approx. date)

1919 m: Celia Rodriguez (b. 1901) to Ramon Casas (b. 1895) he sets up practice as a doctor in the town of Guayos, province of Santa Clara, not long after he transfers to Güines, closer to his home in Havana to which he commutes. With an interval in the 1930s, he spent the balance of his professional life as the local doctor and dentist at Clemente Fernandez no. 13.

Ramon G. de Mendoza and other investors are given approval for the building of an iron bridge to span the Almendares River and make Marianao and Miramar districts easily accessible by car

1920

Guillermina Villareal leaves Sagua, works as teacher in her uncle Laureano's mills in Las Villas, at night she studies by correspondence to upgrade her education

1923

Samuel Villareal Bonet drowns while living in quarantine in the country after being diagnosed with leprosy

1925

Machado elected president

1927

Ricardo Piloto dies leaving a second wife and two young sons

1928

m: Natalia (Nena) Aróstegui Mendoza and Arturo Bolivar