

Artemisa and its history

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The main settlements founded in the current territories of the province were Alquízar in 1616 and Guanajay (San Hilarión de Guanajay) in 1650. The following villages were founded in the 18th century: San Cristóbal 1743, Bauta (initially known as Hoyo Colorado) 1750, Mariel 1768, San Antonio de los Baños (San Antonio Abad) 1775, next to Ariguanabo River, Güira de Melena 1779, Bahía Honda 1779. Other villages were founded in the 19th century: Candelaria 1809, Artemisa 1810, and Caimito 1827.

The current provincial capital, Artemisa, arose due to the moving of neighbors from the former Havana, who had been affected by a fire. First, the village grew rapidly based on the coffee economy, and later, on the sugar cane, surpassing the neighbors in importance, therefore becoming the second most important city in the former Pinar del Río Province. The ruins of Cafetal Angerona (area used for the growing of coffee), now a National Monument, attest the splendor of coffee cultivation that made the region deserve the appellation of "Jardín de Cuba" (Garden of Cuba).

The current territory of the Province was the scene of several sources of insurgency during the Ten-Year-War. In 1868 several conspiracy groups operated in the area of Candelaria. On February 10th, 1869, the Conspiracy of the Biajacas was discovered, where patriots from San Antonio de los Baños and Vereda Nueva were engaged. The group of bandits of the bautense (someone born in Bauta municipality) Carlos García joined the cause of the so-called "Commander of the West", one of the most feared men by colonial troops, who had the confidence of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

In the stage of the Necessary War several battles were carried out by Antonio Maceo's column, Lieutenant General of the Mambí Army, during his invasion to the west. Artemisa was the headquarters of the general command of the "Trocha de Mariel-Majana" (narrow path from Mariel to Majana Beach) built by the Spaniards in the narrowest part of the island (between Mariel Bay in the north and Majana Beach in the south) with the vain purpose of preventing Maceo's invasion to Pinar del Río province. The so called "trocha" was violated by Maceo several times. General Maceo fell in combat on December 7th, 1896 on San Pedro state, present-day Bauta municipality, where a monument is erected in his honor.

Among the most outstanding figures of the territory in this period are the Brigadier General of the Liberating Army, Alberto Nodarse, member of Maceo's staff and the writer Magdalena Peñaredonda, delegate of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in Pinar de Río Province, both from Artemisa.

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Later, during the Republic, Artemisa's territory had an outstanding participation in the movement led by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz that led to the Moncada Barrack Assault, on July 26th, 1953 in Santiago de Cuba, considered the beginning of the Cuban Revolution that triumphed in 1959. Several dozens of artemiseños (born in Artemisa) and guanajayenses (born in Guanajay) took part in this combative action, 17 of them died in the attack or later in the revolutionary struggle. Several artemiseños also took part in the expedition of the Granma yacht commanded by Fidel Castro, including Captain Ciro Redondo, subsequently fallen in the Sierra Maestra and whose name was given to Column No. 8, commanded by Ernesto, Che Guevara, during the final stage of the war and Julito

Díaz, who fell in the Uvero Combat, on May 28th, 1957. The current Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdés Menéndez, Vice President of the State Council of Cuba, who was also a fighter with Che, was born in Artemisa. Today the remains of the fighters from Artemisa rest in the monument erected to his memory: the Mausoleum of the Martyrs of Artemisa.

Among the most important historical events after the triumph of the 1959 Revolution, is the air raid on San Antonio de los Baños Air Base, on April 15th, 1961; a prelude to the invasion to Girón Beach. The counterrevolutionary attack could destroyed several combat planes, but could not prevent the air supremacy of the Revolutionary Air Force during Playa Girón Battle, whose missions mainly departed from this base, and were a very important factor in the defeat of the invasion.

Among the most outstanding historical figures of the territory, we also have Carlos Baliño (born in Guanajay in 1848), founder of the Cuban Revolutionary Party with José Martí in 1892 and later, during the Republic, founder with Julio Antonio Mella of the First Communist Party of Cuba in 1925, Rubén Martínez Villena (1899-1934), poet and prominent communist leader of the 1930 Revolution, born in Alquízar.

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