

# A Tale of Martina

By Eleanor Philips Barnes / Historian

There is a fully documented account, completely substantiated about the death and burial of FATHER PEDRO CAMPS, the Minorcan priest. He died May 19, 1790, and was buried the next day, May 20, 1790, in Tolomato Cemetery.

It is equally a fact that DON MIGUEL ISNARDY contracted for the building of the Catholic church, part of which is now the new CATHEDRAL. The year was 1793. At this time, the old stones from the Chapel of La Leche plus those from the old chapel in the Tolomato cemetery on Cordova street were being used in the building of the walls of the new edifice.

While the old ruins at Tolomato were being razed, an accident happened, and an enormous stone fell upon the tomb of FATHER CAMPS, smashing the coffin and breaking the leg of the saintly priest's body.

News of this hit the town like wildfire and the Minorcans flocked to the grave site. There they observed the remarkable state of preservation in which their beloved pastor was after three years. He had died in 1790 and this was now 1793. Seeing all this, they demanded that he be reburied in the new church when it was completed; this as proof of his sanctity!

It was not until 1797 that the church was considered completed and the event dragged on until May 20, 1800, before he was finally listed in the records as having been removed to the new church. It was ten years after his death and seven years after his tomb was demolished.

During my years at the Historical Library, an article was found written in 1856 by a French-Canadian, HENRY COUREY DE LAROCHE-HERON after a visit to St. Augustine. In the article he mentions part of this story and his interview with an elderly lady, MARTINA HERNANDEZ, wife of JUAN POMAR and the mother of JUANA POMAR, the wife of FRANCISCO ROGERO!

MARTINA HERNANDEZ told her story in Catalan-Mahonese, the Minorcan lingo, to an Englishman, who translated it into French for Mr. LAROCHE-HERON. She had been born in New Smyrna in 1775 and was 81 years old at time of the interview. She was two years old when the rebellion took place and they made their trek to British Augustine in 1777. She was just 15 years old when FATHER CAMPS died. She was at his funeral. Three years later when she was 18 years old, she knelt by the grave, saw and

touched his supple hands and felt blessed. She remembered well when the remains were transferred to the new church, for she was then a married lady of 25 years of age.

Many years later, a writer of that day, 1887, commenting on the burning of the old church and the finding of several vaults, did some intense research. He found out that a Father Narcisso Font came to St. Augustine to help FATHER CAMPS with his Minorcan speaking parishioners in 1792 and died in 1793 at the age of 31. His were the remains in a vault attached to FATHER CAMPS.'

There was still a third vault which turned out to be that of MIGUEL ISNARDY, the building contractor. It had been a provision in his contract (that he be buried under the church he built). And, when he died in 1803, he was placed in the Cathedral. Receipts, bills and coffin maker's items all proved these facts. But the two stories together give us a very well covered story.

All it said was the "sanctuary" of the old church was the burial place for FATHER CAMPS. There were no wings in the first old church in 1797 or in 1800 when he was moved. The bones were discovered once more in 1887, but legend has it that not all of the bones were found, as if, maybe some devoted Minorcans might have taken a few as relics. However, when this newest renovation took place a few years back, it was clearly indicated that Father CAMPS "may" be under the floor where the old confessional used to be, on the left side as you enter. (St. Joseph is there now.) But, does one really know?????

Anyway, your ancestress saw all of this, was overjoyed, saddened, and probably mad as all the devil at various times while these events transpired. Where was she? She lived on Spanish and Cuna Streets, wife of JUAN POMAR. She was an auburn haired HERNANDEZ. He was full of the old religious zeal and as cocky a fighter as any Minorcan!

The year was 1790 and she was there! The year was 1800 and she was there! The year was 1856 and she was still there at 81 years of age. She was dying on another May 20<sup>th</sup>, 72 years after the death of her dear Father CAMPS. She gave up the spirit early on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of May, 1862. In closing her eyes, she was the last of the Minorcans born in New Smyrna to go to her final resting place. She was the mother of JUANA POMAR ROGERO, wife of FRANCISCO ROGERO.