

GUATEMALA INDEPENDENCE



Map of the United Provinces of Central America (Photo: Hispanoteca)

HISTORY

The signing of the Central American Independence Act was an event that marked the course of the new nations that, during three centuries of colonialism, made up the Captaincy General of Guatemala, assigned to the Viceroyalty of New Spain, which encompassed what is now Chiapas and Soconusco in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

During the 18th century, a series of administrative and political events took place in Spain with the aim of restoring its former economic privileges to the Crown. However, the Bourbon Reforms ended up providing economic benefits to Creoles, descendants of conquerors and European parents born in the New World, who made up the dominant group in Spanish America.

Taking as a reference the ideas of the Enlightenment, the American Spaniards saw possibilities in "the West Indies" to reorganize the State and an opportunity to participate in foreign trade with the Motherland and Europe. The Independence of the United States (1776) and the French Revolution (1789) stimulated the desire of Central Americans to become independent.

In spite of everything, the different interests of the Creoles and peninsulares (civil servants, envoys of the Crown) were the foundation for the conflict that would arise at the beginning of the 19th century in search of their emancipation. At the end of 1811 uprisings occurred throughout the Captaincy General and Government of Guatemala. The gradual and decaying power of the Crown fueled crisis within the American power groups.

In 1820 two political parties were formed, based on the Spanish Constitution of 1812, where the power of the Monarchy was limited and Feudalism was abolished. The first group consisted mainly of Creoles and supporters of Independence. On the other hand, there were the rich peninsular merchants, who opposed independence, as this affected their economic interests.

After several conflicts in South America, where revolutionary deeds led by military leaders and the establishment of the Mexican Empire took place, Central America declared its Independence on September 15, approved by 23 votes in favor and 7 against.

The Act of Independence was signed in the Royal Palace, located west of the Central Plaza of Guatemala City, which was destroyed by the earthquakes of 1917. Currently the Act is kept in the National Museum of History.



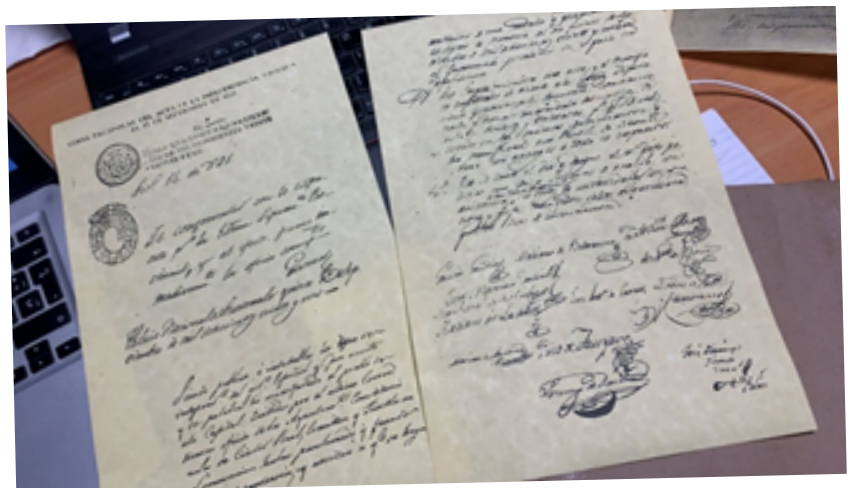
Royal Palace of Guatemala where the Act of Independence was signed, 1821
(Photo: Miguel Alfredo Álvarez Arévalo)

History allows us to know our past. It is important to emphasize that September 14, 1821, when the Deputy Inspector of Troops, Gabino Gainza, called the so-called Historical Session, which would take place at the National Palace at 8 am the next day.

In this way, Guatemala began its path as a free, sovereign and independent country that morning of September 15, 1821, in a meeting in Guatemala City with the representatives of the Central American provinces, in which its independence from Spain was declared. and they make up a provisional Governing Board, signing the act of sovereignty.

The Act was drawn up and signed by the so-called *Próceres de la Independencia*:

- José Cecilio del Valle
- Mario Beltranena
- Mario Calderón
- José Marías Delgado
- Manuel Antonio Molina
- Mariano Larrave
- Antonio Rivera
- J. Antonio Larrave
- Isidro del Valle
- Mariano Aycinena
- Pedro Arroyave
- Lorenzo Romaña
- Domingo Diéguez
- Pedro Malina
- Brigadier Gabino Gainza



Reproduction of first and last folios Act of Independence

Courtesy National Museum of History

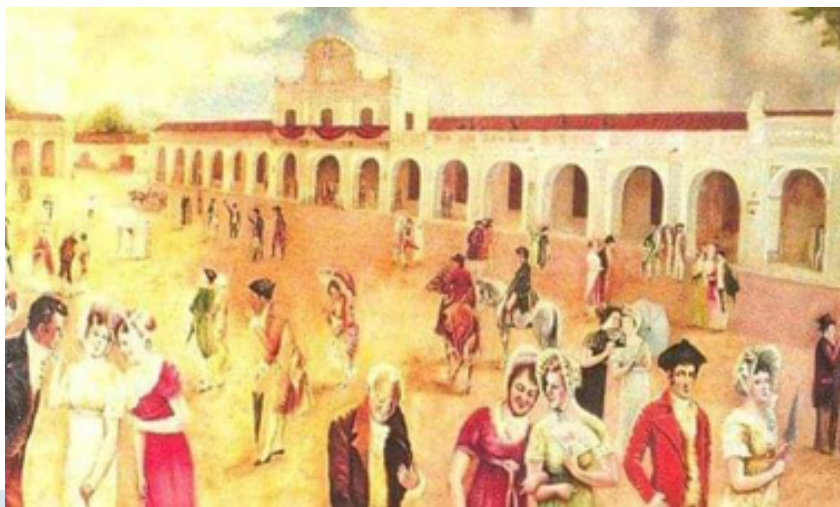
RAFAEL DE BELTRANENA TRIPTYCH

(Guatemala 1867–1952)

To commemorate 100 years of Independence, in 1921 Rafael Beltranena y Piñol made a series of three paintings referring to Independence Day. Baptized as *La Mañana*, *La Tarde* and *La Noche*, these works are now celebrating their second centenary



The most famous painting in the series is *La Mañana*. This piece shows the heroes of Independence gathered in an Extraordinary Meeting, during the first hours of Saturday, September 15, 1821. José Cecilio del Valle, who was asked to write the minutes, and Miguel Larrañaga, were invited to this assembly, as secretary. As anecdotal data, it is known that the signed certificate was the second that was made, since in the table there is a torn paper on the ground, which would correspond to the first attempt at the minutes



To give life to *La Tarde*, Beltranena placed an advertisement in the newspapers of the time, so that the families of the signing heroes, who had miniatures of them, could lend them to faithfully reproduce their faces, recreating the Plaza, in front of the Palace of Government, today Centennial Park



La Noche was immortalized with a reception attended by Creole families, who forged a new nation, no longer linked to the Homeland. In the work you can see the musical instruments of the time and social position.



Shortly before his death, in 1952, the author was able to see his work perpetuated in the Q.20.00 banknotes that still circulate in Guatemala, where the scene of the writing of the Act of Independence in 1821 is observed

1821
2021

Billete conmemorativo

El Banco de Guatemala emite su primer billete conmemorativo en la historia de la Banca Central, en ocasión del Bicentenario de la Independencia de Guatemala. El billete conmemorativo en la denominación de Q20.000, es de curso legal y poder liberatorio limitado.

Características del billete:

- Registro gráfico a través de un sistema de seguridad.
- Microtexto y elementos de seguridad.
- Estructura de seguridad de alta tecnología.
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El diseño consiste en una composición artística que une dispositivos de seguridad de última generación y evoca estéticamente el acto emancipador.

Impresión de 20 millones de billetes, equivalentes a 200 millones de quetzales.

Entidad emisora: Banco de Guatemala, Tecnología, Unidad, de Avanzada.

Comunicación: Fianza de seguridad.

Today, the original paintings in the trilogy are part of a private collection. However, the National Museum of History, has faithful reproductions of each one

We warmly thank Mr. Miguel Álvarez, Director of the National Museum of History and the Directorate of Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, for the reproduction of the works that, on this occasion, Hoteles Porta is pleased to present to its guests and visitors.



Entrance staircase to the National Museum of History (Photo: Miguel Alfredo Álvarez Arévalo)