

PATRIOT GRAVE MARKING EVENTS- SAR August 31, 2024

By Jesus Benayas

Good afternoon, distinguish guests, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Jesus Benayas, president of the House of Spain in San Diego. I was born in Spain and came to San Diego County as a foreign student in the early 1970's, to attend Grossmont Jr. College. I came here to study science, and I decided to pursue Electrical Engineering.

Even though my emphasis was Science and Engineering, I had to take classes in history of the United States of America. I found it very odd that the history that I was being taught here was quite different from what I had been taught in Spain.

Here in the U.S. starts with the arrival of the Mayflower in 1620, then the Boston Tea Party revolt, and the Declaration of Independence in 1776. There was no mention of Christopher Columbus 1492 voyage, no landing of Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 in Florida (which was 107 years before Mayflower), no landing of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542 in San Diego (78 years before the Mayflower) or the founding of the City of San Diego in 1769 (7 years before the Declaration of Independence). No mention of Spain's 107 years of exploration and founding of cities, roads, geography and settlements throughout what today we call the United States of America. France was mentioned many, many times but Spain was left out.

It was in 2009 that I met members of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR for short). Especially one member, Philip Hinshaw (rest in peace), that opened a new chapter in my life. Since that year until he passed away in 2023, we worked together finding more and more information about how Spain was so vital in the Independence of the United States of America.

Today, I am very thankful to the San Diego Chapter of the SAR for their recognition of these forgotten Patriots that contributed to the Independence of the United States and the beginning of the Spanish settlements in California.

These Patriots were from all different walks of life and different parts of the Spanish Empire. Some from Spain, others born in New Spain (today

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Mexico) and others native Americans (from today Mexico or the United States).

If you have not read about the sea and land expeditions of Gaspar de Portola, Father Serra, Juan Bautista de Anza, Father Fond and Father Garces expedition diaries, I recommend that you do.

If you have not been to the House of Spain, located in Balboa Park, I invite you to come and see it. It is a small cottage, but we have 500 years of history on display to visitors. Many of them are surprised to find out that Spain was involved in the American Revolution. Some of them seem upset that the U.S. school system have failed by not teaching them about this part of history. Others say, “I’ve never heard of such a thing, where did you find such information?”

Again, I commend the San Diego Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution for their work recognizing Spain’s vital involvement in the American Revolution.

Now, let’s get to work and plan for the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026!