

FAMILY ANCESTRY

Prepared by Domingo Galdós (y Solaún/Betancourt/Grenier), May 2014

I have written this short piece, primarily for our family members, in preparation for a more detailed and complete paper on our families from as far back as possible to present day. So here you will find the most basic information on each of the four families. There is more material for the Galdós and Betancourt families simply because I received more written information and also because more has been published on them by third parties.

For example, in the Galdós family I have a reproduction of a painting by Velazquez from the time the family was in the Madrid Courts of King Philip IV circa 1630. Also for this family I have the memoirs of Don Benito Pérez Galdós (*“Memorias de un Desmemoriado”*)⁽¹⁾ where he refers to the family, in Spain, the Canary Islands and Cuba. I have much less documentary information for the Solaún and Grenier families.

Ultimately research must be undertaken locally. I did some of that for the Galdós family on several trips I made to Guipuzcoa, Spain, but much more needs to be done. I was in Toulouse some years ago but did not research the Greniers there. Next time I travel to Spain I'll make a point of visiting Llodio to research the Solaún family there. I'm sure many questions will be answered then.

On the Betancourt family, I have a very substantial amount of information passed on to me by my paternal grandmother María Betancourt viuda de Galdós. Some of it relates to her cousin Manuel Cardenal Arteaga y Betancourt, who passed away in Cuba a year or two after our exodus. He was the Archbishop of Havana and the first Cardinal ever in Cuba. Part of that information was used during the Betancourt reunion, which took place in Miami in 2005.

Synopsis

There are four branches in our family, which I have included in the present paper: Galdós, Solaún, Betancourt and Grenier. In tracing back these four families I am using various documentary sources

namely, written history, paintings and/or, where available, photographs, oral tradition and miscellaneous letters, notes and other communications.

- **Galdós [Galdotz]**

This family originates from the Pyrenees mountains area of what is the Basque region of present-day Spain and France. Specifically, from the Town of Urretxo in Guipuzcoa. Part of the family moved to the Courts in Madrid and thereafter nobleman Domingo Galdós traveled to the Canary Islands appointed to the Inquisition in the Canary Islands by King Charles III, a very successful and well-liked monarch who provided strong and enlightened leadership as well as stable and consistent government. From there the family immigrated to Cuba two generations later. The renowned Spanish writer Don Benito Pérez-Galdós relates all this in his writings and memoirs. He was the grandson of Domingo Galdós. ⁽²⁾

- **Solaún**

The Solaún are from the Town of Llodio, Vizcaya, Spain as far back as records can be found. The Solaún brothers (José, Manuel, Francisco and Bernardino) emigrated from Spain to Cuba during the period between the two wars of independence. This was a period of relative political stability and economic viability, which began after the Zanjón Peace Agreement was signed in 1878 by the warring parties, namely the Spanish Colonial Government of Cuba and the pro-independence Cubans. I do not have the exact date the Solaún brothers reached

Cuba but all sources point to the time between 1878 and 1883.

▪ **Betancourt [*Bèthencourt*]**

They are Scandinavians, descendants from the ancient Vikings in what today is Sweden and Norway. These Viking warriors colonized multiple regions in Europe and elsewhere but the Betancourts,' predecessors, being Viking conquerors, invaded northern France together with other Vikings knights and established themselves in what is known today as Normandy. Normans are not French (Franks), instead they are Vikings from Scandinavia (Norseman, Viking). The Normans were feared warriors famed for their military spirit as well as for being pious Christians. Normans conquered England under William the Conqueror, and their culture and influence spread to Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They were also prominent in the First Crusade. By the year 1130 Normans had conquered England, parts of Italy, Northern Africa, and parts of the Middle East. Some of the first Europeans to reach America were Vikings, at L'Anse aux Meadows, who preceded Christopher Columbus.

L'Anse aux Meadows (or Jellyfish Cove) is an archaeological site on the northernmost tip of the Island of Newfoundland in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Discovered in 1960, it is the most famous site of a Norse or Viking settlement in North America outside Greenland.

A Norman nobleman knight by the name of Jean de Bèthencourt sailed to the Canary Islands from Normandy in 1402, about ninety years before Christopher Columbus discovered America. His purpose was to conquer the islands and rule them as king. With that in mind, he sought financing from various monarchs in Europe and accepted a most lucrative offer from Castilian King Henry III. Bèthencourt became King of the Islands but offered sovereignty to the Spanish Crown in exchange for generous financial assistance consisting of annual payments. This significant event made possible Columbus' successful trips by providing him with supplies and needed rest for crossing the Atlantic almost a century later.

- **Grenier**

The Grenier family is one of the most ancient and noble families in France. They originated from Southern France, from the area where present day Toulouse is located. The Grenier were fervent Christians who participated in the Crusades and had a prominent role in establishing the Crusader Kingdoms. A member of this ancient family was Crusader Knight and Constable of Jerusalem, Eustace of Grenier who, in the absence of King Baldwin, the third King of Jerusalem in 1118, defeated an invading Egyptian Army at the battle of Yibneh at the beginning of 1123. ⁽³⁾

The Grenier family is **the oldest established noble** family in France.

*“Balian, Lord of Sidon, was the head of the oldest-established noble family [in France], the **Greniers**, and he was also John of Beirut’s nephew through his mother Helvis of Ibelin.”*⁽³⁾

Notes:

(1) **Pérez-Galdós**, Don Benito, *Memorias de un Desmemoriado*, Obras Completas, Editorial Aguilar, Bilbao, 1941, page 1,471.

(2) Information courtesy of Ambassador Mauricio Solaún y Giberga (direct descendant of Abilia Grenier) in an article in the January 2011 issue of *History Today* [historytoday.com] by Simon **Montefiore** titled *Jerusalem: Dark and Satanic*, page 47.

(3) **Riley-Smith**, Jonathan, *The Crusades*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987, Chapter 8th *The Latin East, 1192 – c.1291*, Constitutional Conflict in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, page 195.