

Who's Who on Venezuela Notes, Part II



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Recently *Banco Central de Venezuela* (B.C.V.) put into circulation bank notes of different denominations such as: 1,000; 2,000; 5,000; 10,000; 20,000 and 50,000 bolívares. Some of those paper notes were issued by *Casa de la Moneda de Venezuela*. For this reason, I would like to share with you brief biographies about illustrious patriots such as: *Libertador* Simón Bolívar, Gen. Francisco de Miranda and Grand Marshall Antonio Jose de Sucre and notables educators and statesmen as Don Andres Bello, Don Simón Rodriguez and Dr. José Maria Vargas.

Simón Bolívar (Bs. 1,000 ; 5,000 & 10,000)

Simon Bolivar was born into a wealthy Creole family in Caracas, on July 24, 1783. His father was rich and owned a great deal of land but died while Simon was only a child. His mother died too when he was a boy so that other people had to bring him up.

Revered by many South Americans as "*El Libertador*," he is also called by some the "George Washington of South America." Simon Bolivar led a successful 14-year revolution to relinquish Spain's colonial rule of the area that comprises Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and his homeland Venezuela.

During this conflict, he earned a reputation as a resolute commander and exceptional military tactician, but perhaps his most enduring contribution to the South American independence movement was his political vision for the colonies he liberated. Bolívar was even offered the crown in recognition of his contribution to South America

independence, but he rejected the offer. This vision consisted of an unusual combination of authoritarianism and republicanism.

Ultimately, Bolivar's lifelong ambition was to replace the Spanish colonial system in Latin America with a closely allied confederation of republics (Known as Gran Colombia) that shared common political and economical goals.

In 1826, Bolívar organized the first conference of the newly independent states of former Spanish America, held in Panama. Mexico, Peru, Colombia and the Central American states met together in what was to become the Organization of American States.

Bolívar's final years were marked by misfortune. He survived an assassination attempt, only to witness the slow breakup of the Colombia Federation and war between Colombia and Peru. In 1829, his home province of Venezuela declared itself independent.

Bolívar settled on a ranch in Santa Marta, Colombia. On December 17, 1830, he died of tuberculosis. His remains were carried out to Venezuela in 1842.

Actually, in Venezuela he appears in new coins of several denominations such as: 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 bolívares. Also, he is on notes of 1,000 (1991/1998), 5,000 (1994) and 10,000 bolívares in 1998.

Don Andres Bello (Bs. 2,000)

Andres Bello was born on November 29, 1781, in Caracas into a middle-class Creole family. In 1797, he entered the University of Caracas, receiving of arts degree in 1800. He then studied law and medicine there. To ougment income, he tutored his friends, the most outstanding of

whom was Simón Bolívar, the future liberator of South America.

In 1802, he abandoned his studies and to enter government service. He edited the first newspaper published in Venezuela, the "*Gazeta de Caracas*" (1808), he wrote the first book "*Calendario, manual y guia universal*" (1810). When a provisional government was established in 1810, he was sent to London as part of a diplomatic mission headed by Bolívar.

In the British capital, he collaborated, in the publication of the magazines "*El Español*" (1810-14) and "*Censor Americano*" (1820). Finally, he edited the "*Biblioteca Americana*" (1823) and "*Repertorio Americano*" (1825-27). He became as a cultural ambassador in this city. When he was offered a position in the Chilean government, he accepted, and he departed with his family in 1829.

In Chile, he helped write the Constitution in 1833. Bello was editor of the newspaper "*El Araucano*" between 1830 and 1853; he was senator (1837-1864). His Spanish Grammar is perhaps the greatest ever produced. His Civil Law is still effect in Chile and many other Latin American countries. His works on philosophy are very esteemed and his book on International Law was acclaimed as a classic. Also, he funded the Universidad de Chile. Bello died in Santiago de Chile on Oct. 15, 1865. Therefore, he is considered greatest humanist and intellectual of 19th century.

In Venezuela, Bello has appeared on notes of 50 bolívares and Academic building at center since 1972 and until 1977. Later he appeared on a commemorative note of the bicentennial birth of Andres Bello (1781-1981) and a scene showing

Bello teaching young Bolivar on back. Also notes with his likeness appeared on the first one in 1985 and 1988. Finally, he appeared in 1990 to 1995 with light modifications. Now his portrait is on the 2,000 bolívares (1998) at right and the Bolívar Peak is on the back.

Also, Banco Central de Chile issued a new note of 20,000 Pesos (1998). Bello's portrait appears on this note and Universidad de Chile is on the back.

Gral. Francisco de Miranda (Bs. 5,000)

He was born in Caracas on March 28, 1750, the son of a Spaniard from the Canary Islands. Early in life he entered the Spanish Army and went to Madrid supplied with ample funds and letters of introduction. He bought a captaincy and began to keep the dairy which in time became the nucleus of an immense archive. His military career was not fortunate. Accused of neglect of duty, he was eventually cleared and was sent to Cuba, where he again fell out with the authorities.

In 1781, he left the Spanish Army and fled to the United States. Henceforth, Miranda was in open rebellion against the Spanish Crown. Spurred by the example of the 13 colonies that had achieved independence from England, he aspired to set up an independent empire in Hispanic America.

Among his friends in the United States were such men as: Washington, Hamilton and Thomas Paine. Constantly hounded by Spanish agents he visited England, Prussia, Austria, Italy, Turkey and Russia. Catherine the Great took a liking to him and allowed him to wear the Russian uniform and use a Russian passport.

In 1790, he offered his services to French Army. He fought in several wars during French Revolution and his name was later inscribed at the Arc of Triumph and he became unique Latin American which appears in this solemn monument

among those of the great captains that fought in this revolution.

In 1810, he met the envoy of revolutionary Venezuela, Simon Bolivar. Bolivar induced Miranda to return to his native country, and after 40 years of absence, the aging conspirator again set foot in his homeland. In addition, Miranda was creator of Venezuelan flag and later Colombia and Ecuador adopted the same colors and its symbolize emancipation from Spain in South America.

Gral. Miranda suggested to Venezuelan Congress to issue some notes of denominations: 1,2,4,8, and 16 Pesos. In 1811 those notes were put into circulation but only for one year. Thus, Venezuela became the first country which issued notes in Spanish America.

In the Venezuelan civil war he concluded an armistice with the Spanish counterrevolutionary Monteverde. The victorious Monteverde sent him to Spain and threw him into prison, where in 1816 he died in Cadiz, in the fortress of the Four Towers.

Miranda's portrait has appeared on notes of 5 bolivares since 1968 until 1974 and the same design in 1989 with his friend Bolívar. Now he is on the 5,000 bolívares (2000), inspired in a work of a French painter Georges Rouget which is in a Museum of Versailles and his painting is shared with the Central Hydroelectric Raúl Leoni or also known as Guri Dam located in Bolívar State on back.

Grand Marshall Antonio Jose de Sucre (Bs. 2,000; Bs. 10,000)

Antonio Jose de Sucre was born on February 3, 1795, in Cumaná (capital of Sucre state today) in northeast of Venezuela. He is the son of Don Vicente Sucre and Manuela Alcalá. He received his education in Caracas where in 1808 he started his studies of mathematics and, subsequently, of engineering.

In the Patriot Army he began his brilliant military career in 1810, he

was involved in the Independence War, leaving apparent his intelligence, his nobility and, above all, his moral integrity. Sucre played a large role in the military and political liberation of several South American countries and he achieved extraordinary military success and fought alongside *Libertador* Simón Bolívar.

Among his military victories of major relevance are: Battle of Boyacá, Colombia (1819) which secured the independence of Colombia; Yaguachi, Ecuador (1821); Pichincha, Ecuador (1822) which secured the independence of Ecuador; Pasto, Colombia (1822); Junin, Peru (1824) and finally in Ayacucho, Peru (1824) the place where he received a promotion to Grand Marshall for consolidating the independence from Spain for the entire northwest of South America.

On the other hand, for his large contributions and his honesty, Sucre was named by Simón Bolívar, president for life for the rising of the Republic of Bolivia, as well as the first president of this country in 1826, a position practiced for two years due to a failed rebellion that depressed him even more. He became desperate to return to Quito, Ecuador, where, in 1828, he married his longtime sweetheart Marquis Mariana Carcelén and he established his permanent home.

In January 1830, Sucre was designated President of the Constituent Congress of Colombia. Soon after he received Bolivar's presidency resignation from the Republic of Colombia. The formal disintegration of Gran Colombia was just months ahead.

On June 4, 1830 when he was going to Quito, Ecuador, he died of musket fire in the Berruecos mountains in Pasto province in southern Colombia. In 1842 an undistinguished army Colonel Apolinar Morillo was convicted for this crime.

The portrait of this Venezuelan revolutionary and notable statesman had appeared also on notes of Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia.

Ecuador adopted the "sucre" as the monetary unit in tribute to him. Actually, in Venezuela he has appeared since 1994 on notes of 2,000 bolívares and now Antonio J. de Sucre is on 10,000 bolívares with the legend "República Bolivariana de Venezuela" and a view of the Supreme Court Building on back.

Don Simón Rodríguez (Bs. 20,000)

Don Simón Rodríguez was born in Caracas in 1769. His parents were Don Cayetano Carreño and Rosalía Rodríguez. He adopted his mother's last name after a discussion with his elder brother Cayetano.

Rodríguez was an educator and among his pupils was Simón Bolívar. Rodríguez began his lessons about the time Bolívar's mother died, and Bolívar later acknowledged the power of the Enlightenment ideas Rodríguez conveyed: "You have molded my heart for liberty, justice, greatness and beauty. I have followed the path you traced for me." Their relationship had its fullest effect for five years.

In the mid- 1797 Rodríguez traveled to the United States. He worked as a typesetter in Baltimore for three years. As a typesetter, he joined and heightened its artisan skill with his pedagogical and aesthetic dowries. Then he returned to Europe because he was a devotee of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and French Revolution ideologies. He traveled around Europe for a long-time.

In 1805, Bolívar went to Vienna, to visit his old tutor, Rodríguez, with whom set out on a walking trip to Rome. Admirers accept the dramatic story that while in Rome Bolívar took Rodríguez to the top of Mount Sacro. There Bolívar swore to God he would never rest until his homeland was independent.

Later, Rodríguez returned to South America. In Bolivia and Chile, he founded technical schools to learn a trade for young people who lacked money. In Ecuador, he was a botanical and agricultural professor.

In 1828, he wrote his first book

titled "*Extracto Sucinto sobre la Educación Republicana*" (Brief Summary about Republican Education). In 1830, another book was published titled "*El Libertador del Mediodía de America*" (The Liberator at Midday of America) and "*Sociedades Americanas*" (American Societies) in 1842.

Simón Rodríguez died in a small town called San Nicolás de Amatope, Perú on February 28, 1854. His remains were transferred to the National Pantheon in 1954, in the centenary of his death. His portrait is on notes of 20,000 bolívares at right in Venezuela and the view of Angel Falls on back. A new issue was released in 2003 with the legend "República Bolivariana de Venezuela" on back and it was issued by *Casa de la Moneda de Venezuela*. Rodríguez is considered the educator of a continent.

Dr. José María Vargas (Bs. 50,000)

José María Vargas was born in La Guaira, on March 2, 1786. He studied in the University of Caracas, where he was graduated in 1806 in philosophy and in 1808 in medicine. In 1809 he translated Rousseau's "*Contract Social*," which he circulated privately among his friends for fear of the authorities.

Early in 1810 he began the practice of his profession in Cumaná, which province sent him as representative to congress, and he arrived in La Guaira just before the earthquake on March 26, 1812, which destroyed nearly the whole city and killed 4,000 people. He was the only surviving physician, and his self-sacrifice in saving lives and attending the wounded was acknowledged by the municipality and the national executive.

After the capitulation of Miranda in the same year, Vargas was thrown by order of Monteverde into the dungeons of La Guaira; but in 1813 he received permission to emigrate. He continued his studies in the University of Edinburgh, was received as a member of the Royal

College of Surgeons of London, and traveled for some time through England and France.

Afterward he practiced his profession for several years in Puerto Rico; but he returned in 1825 to Caracas, where in 1826, by order of Bolívar, he reorganized the university and in 1827 was elected its rector. He founded the chairs of anatomy, chemistry, and surgery, and besides teaching these branches for some time in the university, gave private instruction to the best students at night in his home. In 1830 he was elected by Caracas to the constituent congress of Venezuela.

In 1834, Vargas was elected to the presidency of the republic, which he was forced by public clamor to accept after repeated declinations. On February 9, 1835, he took charge of the executive, and during his term he gave his salary as president to hospitals, schools, and other beneficent objects.

When a mutiny of the military party, which hated the first civilian president, began in Caracas on July 8, 1835. Vargas with the vice-president was exiled to St. Thomas; but before leaving he had time to convoke the council and issue a decree appointing Gen. Paez, who was then living in retirement, commander-in-chief for the re-establishment of order.

In 1836, he returned and repeatedly handed in his resignation, which was at last reluctantly accepted by congress. Also Dr. Vargas returned to his functions in the university and as director of public instruction, from 1838 until 1846 was a member of senate and almost continuously its president.

His anxiety, caused by the uninterrupted internal strife in his country, injured his health, and in 1853 he went to New York and he died in this city on July 13, 1854. He left his anatomical collections and physical cabinet, part of his library of 8,000 volumes, and two houses, to the university, the rest of the library

to the National library and his mineral and botanical collections to the National Museum of Caracas. Dr. Vargas' portrait is on note of Bs. 50,000 (1998) as tribute of the "Father of Medicine" in Venezuela.

**National Pantheon
(Bs. 5 ; Bs. 1,000)**

The National Pantheon was built as a church, but today it serves as the final resting place for Venezuelan heroes, including Simón Bolívar. This national monument is the most sacred building of the city and it is guarded around the clock (the open tomb you will see was intended for independence hero Gen. Francisco de Miranda, but his body was never recovered after his death in prison in Spain).

Caracas was not significantly modernized until the regime of Gen. Antonio Guzman Blanco, a talented

Liberal leader. The Guzman era (1870-1888) saw the construction of some of the city's oldest monuments and buildings such as: the Capitol, Santa Teresa Church, the National Pantheon. Also, the Municipal Theater was built, the first Academy of Fine Arts was established, and education was furthered.

In March, 1879, Venezuela adopted "bolívar" as its monetary unit by decree of President Gen. Guzman Blanco. Also he created the first mint or *Casa de la Moneda* in Caracas in 1883. For this reason, he became known as *El Modernizador* ("The Modernizer"). Gen. Guzman Blanco was overthrown and exiled in France where he died in 1888.

Close to the National Pantheon is located *Plaza Bolívar* in downtown Caracas. It is a peaceful square that used to be the center of old Caracas. In the middle a statue of Simón

Bolívar on horseback pays tribute to the plaza's namesake.

On 5 bolívares (1968-74) the National Pantheon appears at the center of the back. Also, the on 100 bolívares (1980) Bolívar Monument into the National Pantheon at center. A different view of the National Pantheon is on the 1000 bolívares (2000).

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