

Plaza 24 de febrero, un sitio lleno de historia *February 24 Square, a place full of history*

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Resumen

El presente trabajo representa parte de la historia del terruño guantanamero, en el que se atesora, a partir del material didáctico Una visita a La Plaza 24 de febrero, su realidad, conservación, y a la vez brinda un conocimiento de todos hechos históricos ocurridos en la misma o su alrededor, así como un sitio cultural y político de la ciudad. Los materiales didácticos constituyen una alternativa metodológica para la orientación y preparación de los docentes para desarrollar de manera efectiva el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje de la historia local. A partir de la introducción de los materiales didácticos en el proceso docente educativo, se ha logrado un mayor impacto y efectividad en el conocimiento de la historia local por parte de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Historia local; Visita virtual; Cultura identitaria; Material didáctico.

Abstract

The current research represents part of the Guantanamo's history, in which it is treasured, from the didactic material a visit to the February 24th Square, its actual situation, conservation, and at the same

time it offers a knowledge of all historical facts happened in or around the square, as well as a cultural and political place of the city. The didactic materials constitute a methodological alternative for the orientation and preparation of teachers to effectively develop the teaching-learning process of local history. Since the introduction of didactic materials in the educational teaching process, a greater impact and effectiveness has been achieved in the students' knowledge of local history.

Keywords: Local history, Virtual tour, Identity culture, Didactic material.

Introduction

In the Military Education Department of Guantanamo University, extra-university relations are manifested in a systemic way, these favor academic, labor and research links through the Defense Preparation Discipline (DPD).

The relations are extended to other institutions of the territory such as the University of Medical Sciences, Defense Preparation Provincial School, Military Region and the Antonio Maceo Order Border Brigade.

The Vision is to raise the quality of the training of students in basic elements of National Security and Defense, and disaster risk reduction, to update all teachers and cadres through postgraduate and diploma courses in these same subjects, in the territory to train key managers through courses and advice on disaster risk reduction management, and to cooperate in the development of wartime plans in agencies and entities, this involves raising the scientific and methodological level of teachers in the department.

Its mission is to carry out the task entrusted by the Department of Military Education of the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE), fulfilling the substantive processes of higher education, for which we work in three fundamental components:

1. In the curricular area, through the Discipline of Preparation for Defense.
2. Extracurricular, the preparation of the Territorial Troops Militias (TTM).
3. In the socio-political life, through the Military Patriotic and Internationalist Patriotic Education Work (IPEW), materialized in the workshops held every year.

In the extension work carried out by the University of Guantánamo in the communities, it contributes to the formation of values, among them patriotism, where work has been done to strengthen the knowledge of local history where a set of didactic materials have been elaborated

to facilitate this work, both in the population and in the university community, within them we relate the following didactic materials:

- The Mausoleum of the Guantanamo Mambisado.
- The Revolution Square Mariana Grajales.
- A visit to the house museum Major General Pedro A. Pérez.
- The museum and virtual visit to the provincial museum of Guantanamo.
- Policarpo Pineda Rustán, the bravest of Guantanamo's colonels.

Several of these materials were contributed to the socio-cultural project of the South Isleta Defense Council, they are located in the different schools, semi boarding, high schools, undergraduate schools that are within this defense council, in addition it was located in the Young Computer Club of the southern part of Guantanamo city.

The Military Patriotic and Internationalist Patriotic education is the activity oriented and directed by the Cuba Communist Party that is carried out with the purpose of educating each citizen in the love of the homeland, its traditions, its culture, in the respect to its heroes and martyrs and in the feeling of national dignity.

The development of local history was conceived as a complex process that takes place in any socio-educational activity, which allows the student a developmental learning from a perspective associated with the assimilation and construction of knowledge at different levels of performance and development, that is, from the reproductive, productive, developmental and research; which is part of the didactic direction using teaching materials on local history in the teaching-learning process.

In the treatment given to the teaching-learning process of local history, the use of didactic materials is proposed, assuming the criteria of Cebrián, quoted by Cabero (2001):

All objects, technological equipment and devices, spaces and places of cultural interest, environmental programs or itineraries, educational materials that, in some cases use different forms of symbolic representation, and in others, are direct referents of reality. Being always subject to the analysis of contexts and didactic principles or introduced in a teaching program, they favor the reconstruction of knowledge and cultural meanings of the curriculum. (p. 290).

The Department of Military Education of the University of Guantánamo, was given the task of solving the problems faced when determining the insufficiencies in the Material Base of Study to give

treatment to the local history of the province in the teaching-learning process, for which we determined the following problematic situation:

- Teachers do not have a solid study material base that allows them to raise their level of scientific-methodological preparation to give an outlet to the study of local history.
- Insufficient didactic materials for the learning of local history.

The following scientific problem is proposed in order to solve the above problémica situation:

Which didactic materials to elaborate for the development of the teaching-learning process of local history as a form of the Military and Internationalist Patriotic Education Work at the University of Guantanamo?

Hence, the objective consists in the presentation of didactic materials for the teaching-learning of local history within the contents of the discipline Preparation for Defense in order to make the study of the contents more attractive and real, according to the demands to be achieved in the professional's model.

A didactic material is provided for the teaching-learning of local history in the form of a virtual visit to February 24th Square in Guantanamo province, from any part of the geography of our province or the country, taking into account the economic situation of the country, especially the situation of transportation and fuel with a considerable saving of resources.

In addition, it provides the Department of Military Education and teachers in general with didactic material to develop the teaching-learning process of local history. It also offers activities that, by operating with the didactic materials, allow to enhance the work with the contents of the subjects of the discipline, taking into consideration the demands of the professional model of the careers studied at Guantanamo University, contributing to the education in values, especially patriotism and responsibility.

Development

The Guantanamo region, at the end of the XVI century and during the XVII century, was an extensive region, with wide mountainous zones, large plains and scarce population, which were dedicated to cattle raising and the cultivation of some products for self-consumption. In addition to these, there was the exploitation of the salt mines and the cutting of wood in the abundant existing forests.

The bay was used for meat and leather smuggling because of its links with privateers (in the XVI and XVII centuries England, France and Holland used privateers to fight against Spain and its colonies).

At the end of the XVII century, San Anselmo de los Tiguabos was founded, the first town in the Guantanamera region with residents from El Caney, among them, the surname Pérez (Pedro Manuel Pérez Montoya), with an economy based on self-consumption and smuggling across the bay.

At the end of the 18th century, the independence of the Thirteen Colonies, the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution were factors that powerfully influenced the destiny of the island.

In the 19th century, the Spanish crown adopted measures and established the opening of trade with neutral countries, the increase of the slave labor force, and the promotion of the population of unpopulated lands.

In the Guantanamo territory these measures had no influence with an economy dedicated to the production of consumption, where the contraband and the cattle raising were the fundamental occupations.

The outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, at the beginning of the XIX century, exercised a determining role in the development of new forms of appropriation and production in the virgin lands of Guantanamo, with the arrival of French emigrants that came fleeing from the war in Haiti, they arrived with part of their capitals and a certain number of slaves, promoting businesses of diverse nature, fundamentally coffee plantations, taking advantage of their technical knowledge and their enterprising spirit, European contacts and their capitalist spirit.

On November 12, 1803, a society of Frenchmen bought from Manuel Juztiz, the Santa Catalina ranch, with an extension of 1600 horses, at a value of 10,000 pesos.

They were cheap, fertile and mountainous lands, propitious for the crops they knew: coffee in the heights, and cotton in the valley; the latter was replaced by sugar cane.

The agricultural economic development that was generated in the valley and the mountains favored the need for a place that would allow the commercialization of the products that were generated towards the Matabajo and Cerro Guayabo wharf.

That place was the crossroads known as El Saltadero, that is, because of the presence of roads that interlinked the adjacent areas, the valley and the mountainous zone, and in turn with Baracoa and Santiago de Cuba.

This incessant economic activity generated in the landowners the need of a place for the transactions near the producing and shipping areas, and where to acquire the essential for the farms and to contract the exportation of their harvests, without the need of moving to Santiago de Cuba.

This gave rise to stores, warehouses, taverns (selling drinks and food), bakeries, blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, tobacconists, shoemakers, seamstresses, muleteers with their paddocks, barracks, hermitages for religious affairs, and very humble houses made of masonry and mud for the workers and laborers. It was a place of supply, deposit and contracting. The French established their dwellings in the mountains.

In the year 1831, the settlers in their eagerness to organize the town, donated a space to carry out different commercial activities in it, sale of slaves, cavalry practices, sale of any type of products, circus activities, with the early existence of a military garrison (1827), where the first command of the jurisdiction was located.

Already for 1835, the plan of the settlement was raised, where the land of the Square appears, the straight streets are observed, peculiarity that characterizes the excellent layout of the city of Guantánamo.

In the first months of the year 1836, this space was donated by the Society of Catalans of Commerce "Precios, Vida y Cía", in 1831.

The representative of that entity, José Rafart, offered it with two basic objectives: to carry out economic transactions, including the sale of slaves and farm products, as well as to have a space for the operations of the Spanish volunteer corps.

This space first received the name of Constitution Square, a name that would only last a few months, the square would take the name of the Queen-infante Isabel II (1838), constituting the first urban center of the village of Santa Catalina de Risis or Saltadero, genesis of the city of Guantánamo.

The new space inaugurated the urban and architectural development of the territory, and around it streets were delineated and the first houses were built, thus emerging the town of Santa Catalina, which was granted the title of "villa" by the Spanish Crown in 1870.

During the entire colonial period, no part of it was paved, only the base for the statue of Isabel II was built. Mayor Manuel Medrano paved it with reddish concrete and built a pergola, which was later destroyed to place a bust of José Martí.

In 1870, the Guantánamo City Council asked for the grace that the town be granted the title of Villa; among the reasons given to justify the request were the riches that the town possessed at that time.

Guantánamo was granted this category on December 1st of that same year, by then the city had reached a slight growth towards the north, east and west.

In 1871, the first newspaper was founded: The Echo of Guantanamo and in 1874, the Coat of Arms was approved for the nascent town, becoming the first official symbol of the people of Guantanamo.

This square, during the colonial period, witnessed historical events that demonstrated the rebelliousness of the Cubans against the Spanish domination, such as the following events:

- In 1866, the legendary Policarpo Pineda Rustán, in the corner of Los Maceos and Pintó streets, was tied to a column of the Casa de los Broks y Co. where he received numerous lashes for his rebellion against the unjust colonial system.
- In August 1895, on the corner of Varona and Los Maceos, where a warehouse of the Brauet and Co. firm was located, he was a witness of the patriotism and bravery of General Jose Maceo, the Lion of the East, when accompanied by his escort he penetrated through the southern part of the town, advanced along today's Los Maceos street, dismounted from the horse he was riding and entered the warehouse, and toasted a drink for the independence of Cuba.

In 1898, the entrance of Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez through that zone to the city once the military conflict that began in 1895 was over, where the words he pronounced from San Ildefonso are remembered: "If our independence is not assured now, it is my desire to continue fighting for it thirty years more, if necessary".

The Cuban army has not been fighting for annexation, nor for the dominion and control of the United States. Of such event a Sculptural Mural was elaborated on the entrance of the Mambi Troops led by Pedro Agustín Pérez for this place that is located in the walls of the physical education field of the current Polytechnic Institute of Economy Asdrúbal López Vázquez.

It is not until the beginning of the last century, in the republican period, when Major General Pedro Agustín Pérez, mayor of the city, decided to call it February 24, in homage to the date of the restart of the independence struggles of Cuba, in 1895, where Guantanamo was a reliable example of this historical moment organized and directed by Pedro Agustín Pérez from La Confianza and other places of the region.

During the first years of that period, it was used as a market, and then a horse circus, an open-air cinema, refreshment stands and photo booths were installed, thus becoming an amusement park.

In this February 24th Square, rest the Spanish cannons that fought in the Spanish-Cuban-American war, which adorn the same and are silent witness of these events.

At the end of the 1930's, benches rose bushes and other elements were added to the park, turning it into a political park.

In 1948, on the corner of Maceos and Varona, where the School of Economics is located, which was the site of student strikes against the tyranny, the Institute of Secondary Education was located, in the so-called Caserón, which in 1952, witnessed another significant event, when the Student Congress was held, attended by Frank País García.

In the first years after the Triumph of the Revolution, it was used as a children's playground, and later it was used as a zoo, where several species of endemic and non-endemic animals lived together.

On February 3, 1959, the Commander in Chief, Fidel Castro Ruz, accompanied by aviation lieutenant Alvaro Luis Prendes Quintana, arrived in Guantanamo and received a warm welcome from the population, when he addressed the people from the doorway of the School of Commerce, now the Asdrubal Lopez Vazquez Polytechnic Institute of Economics, where there is a bronze plaque that certifies the event.

February 24th Square, whose last inauguration dates back to December 30, 2015 by the then first secretary of the Cuba Communist Party in Cuba's easternmost province, Denny Legrá Azahares; erected on the foundational site of the city.

Nancy Acosta Hernández, president of the Provincial Assembly of People's Power, accompanied the political leader, during a tour that opened new commercial and health facilities that are added to the more than 1,200 works executed under the influence of the local development program in the province since 2007, which raised the sense of belonging and self-esteem of city dwellers.

This square has witnessed different revolutionary and patriotic acts of the city of Guantanamo such as:

- Place where in December the Provincial Assembly of the Popular Power solemnly meets, in an open place to ensure the participation of the people, in addition, during the different events of the Chocolate with Coffee Festival to stimulate and recognize personalities of culture, sports, science and other spheres of social life.

- Political events of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, for the awarding of decorations and promotion to the next higher rank of reserve officers.
- Patriotic marches and acts of revolutionary reaffirmation within the framework of the University Bastion.
- Acts of promotion of MININT officers.
- Activities of the Federation of Cuban Women.
- And others.

The square was designed by the architect José Blanco, it is composed of two fundamental parts, one of them is a playground for the delight of the children and their parents that consists of a series of apparatuses for the amusement fundamentally of the children.

The other, is composed of a square where different political and cultural acts are carried out, the same one is surrounded by banks and luminaries for the recreation of the city dwellers, in addition, in the same one rest the Spanish cannons that fought in that Spanish-Cuban-American war in such a way that they adorn and guard giving it a touch of solemnity.

At the main entrance there is a bronze plaque allegorical to its inauguration in December 2015 and when we enter it, we find the gazebo, guarded by the coat of arms of the city, located on a pedestal, and on the other side the bell of the San Idelfonso sugar mill. Each of these elements has its accreditation plaque.

The bell of the San Idelfonso sugar mill, the most important in the region with 164 muzzled slaves, moved by hydraulic force; it rang during the Ten Years War; in 1880, at the end of the Chiquita War, it was a silent witness of the presence of Generals José Maceo and Guillermo Moncada.

In August 1895, he camped the Lieutenant General Antonio Maceo. During the October Crisis in 1962, it was the camp of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, as well as the coat of arms of Guantanamo city.

This square was enabled by luminaries that embellish it, as well as benches, many of its elements are in white marble which give it majesty, this square is a place that is enabled by one of the first wifi zones of the city.

Conclusions

The research developed has created an impact related to patriotic education, where the traditions of struggle of our brave people can be kept alive. Besides, it is important not only in our Guantanamo

province, but it can bring students and workers of all our national geography closer to the rich history that treasures the February 24th Square.

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