

BEHIND THE VIGNETTE...: Heroines of the Homeland (3)

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Returning to the issue dedicated to *Heroines who forged the Homeland* (17/9/2025) (Fig.1), I have grouped the 13 Heroines displayed there into 4 groups:

- Those that, in their time, influenced the formation of the country (3).
- Those who participated in the Mexican Independence movement (3).
- **Those who participated in the defense of the Republic during the French intervention (2).**
- Those who played a leading role in the Mexican Civil War (5).



Fig.1 Heroines who forged the Homeland, year 2025.

Thanks to the sculptures made of them to build the Paseo de las Heroínas (a) and the issuance of these stamps, we can learn about their lives, their work and pay tribute to each of them by getting to know them and spreading their legacy to Mexico.

This time the topic is **2 outstanding Mexican women who actively participated during the French Intervention (1862-1867).**

Anna Agustina Ramírez Heredia.-

(Position 9 in Fig.1) (Fig.2).

Anna Agustina de Jesús Ramírez Heredia was born in Mocorito, Sinaloa, on **September 1, 1813**. Of **Seri** descent, her parents were José Margarito Ramírez and María Romana Heredia; her father participated in the War of Independence. Agustina married Severiano Rodríguez, and they had 13 sons. Severiano fought and died in Mazatlán in 1859 during the Reform War, fighting on the side of the liberals who supported Benito Juárez.

When the French invaded the country, Mazatlán became a strategic point for both sides, being the most important port on the Pacific Ocean. Agustina's family, with a lineage of service to the nation, was no exception in this conflict, defending it against the foreign invasion. In 1864, when the French attempted to conquer the port from the sea, the town was defended by the inhabitants and the Republican army, in which Agustina's 13 sons were enlisted, defeating the enemy. Agustina instilled in her sons a love for their land and the necessity of defending it at any cost, and thus, during the war, **she lost 12 of her 13 sons** on the battlefields between 1865 and 1867, in different parts of the country. Her sons who died were: Librado, Francisco, José María, Manuel, Victorio, Antonio, Apolonio, Juan, José, Juan Bautista, Jesús, and Francisco Segundo. Only Eusebio survived, and he cared for his mother until her death.



Fig.2 Anna Agustina Ramírez Heredia

In **1868**, the Congress of the state of Sinaloa granted her a pension of 30 pesos per month, which she received for just over a year, apparently due to an administrative error in the budget, despite its approval, she no longer received it. She lived her final days on public charity, **dying on February 14, 1879**, at the **age of 66** in Mazatlán, she was buried in a common grave in the municipal cemetery. In **1958**, her native state declared her a *Distinguished Citizen of the State*, and her name was inscribed in gold letters in the Session Hall of the State Congress. In **1961**, the governor of the state of Sinaloa inaugurated a monument in her honor in the capital, Culiacán, it is there that the *Agustina Ramírez Social Merit Award* is presented annually, recognizing the work of Sinaloan women who have distinguished themselves

through their contributions and service to the community. Many schools at all levels bear her name, both in his home state and in other states. There is also a monument in her honor in her hometown of Mocorito.

This is the first time that **Correos de México** has included her on a postage stamp.

A regional heroine, a worthy example to be known throughout the country.

Margarita Maza.-

(Position 17 in Fig.1) (Fig.3)

Margarita Eustaquia Maza Parada was born in the city of Oaxaca on **March 29, 1826**. She was the adopted daughter of the Spaniard Antonio Maza and his Oaxacan wife, Petra Parada. She received a good education and a comfortable life from her family. Benito Juárez was taken in as an employee at Margarita's parents' home when he arrived in the state capital from his hometown in 1819. Later, as a lawyer, he became Margarita's and her sisters' tutor. Benito and Margarita married on July 31, 1843. She was 17 and he was 37, an unusual union for the time, as it was a Zapotec man marrying a white woman from high society. They had 12 children, but only 7 survived to adulthood: 6 daughters and 1 son.

During her married life, Margarita witnessed turbulent and serious events in the consolidation of independent Mexico: the Northamerican invasion (1846-1848), the Revolution of Ayutla (1854-1857), the Reform War (1858-1860), the French intervention (1862-1867), and the short-lived empire of Maximilian (1864-1867). She was on the front lines of these events from 1853, when President López de Santa Anna exiled Juárez from the country. Margarita, with her six children, fled the persecution of Santa Anna's troops and ended up establishing a store in Etla, near the city of Oaxaca, supporting the rebels against the regime. In 1857, while Juárez was Minister of Justice, he rose to the presidency of the Republic, and Margarita, already with 8 children, moved from Oaxaca to Veracruz to join her husband, amidst the persecution of conservative groups that opposed the Constitution of 1857.

At the beginning of the French intervention, Margarita spearheaded efforts to provide medical supplies to the troops; later, when the French took the capital of the country to establish the empire of Maximilian, Margarita accompanied her husband on his itinerant journey to the north of the country, but in **August 1864** she left Mexico to go into exile in the United States of America along with her children, she was first in New York and then in Washington; her diplomatic contribution at this stage for the recognition of the government of President Juárez is considered decisive, as well as her advice to her husband (b), warning him of betrayals and incompetence of his envoys.



Fig.3 Margarita Maza

Following the overthrow of Maximilian, the United States government provided her with a ship to travel to Mexico, and she arrived at the port of Veracruz on July 17, 1867. She suffered from cancer from 1868 and **died on January 2, 1871, at the age of 45.**

Correos de México issued a stamp with her face in 1972, on the occasion of the Centenary of Don Benito's death; her stamp bears the legend *Faithful Collaborator* (SC#1043).

In the words of historian Patricia Galeana: *"Margarita was a republican, she had great respect for public affairs and participated in every way she could: as a wife, mother, political collaborator, and diplomatic representative. She shared Juárez's liberal and anticlerical ideology."*

It's interesting to learn another angle about a *first lady* who was born and died in the 19th century and who cannot be pigeonholed as the nonentity that women were said to have at that time.

Notes.-

(a) The images of each of the Heroines correspond to the statues that make up the Paseo de las Heroínas (Walk of the Heroines), located in Mexico City on Paseo de la Reforma, from the Monument to Independence to the Puerta de Los Leones (Gate of the Lions). Each statue is made of bronze, measures 1.75 meters high, 60 centimeters wide, and 63 centimeters deep. This Walk of Fame was created during Claudia Sheinbaum's administration as Head of Government of Mexico City. The idea originated in 2020, and it was inaugurated on March 5, 2023. In the News section of this website (etianguui.com), you can find a detailed description of the topic of this editorial in the article "New Issues September 2025."

(b) The correspondence exchanged between Juárez and Margarita during their separation, whether due to his itinerant lifestyle or her exile with her children, has been preserved. These letters have been the subject of novels and showed in cultural exhibitions, allowing readers to follow the unfolding of events from their personal and intimate perspectives. As an example of such a novel, I can cite "Querido Don Benito; el amor que salvó a la Patria" (Dear Don Benito; the Love that Saved the Nation), by Pedro J. Fernández, published in 2020 by Grijalbo, which is based on this correspondence.

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