

Semilla de la Revolution

Fidel, Raul, older brother Ramon and four sisters grew up on a large farm in Holguin province. Angel Castro, their father was a young Spanish soldier when he first arrived in Cuba. Once discharged from the army back in Spain he returned to Cuba.

He first started cutting trees as a logger. Eventually he started his own logging business. He became close friends with a local, Fidel Pino – and would one day name his first son after him.

When Angel Castro had saved some money, his friend Fidel loaned him enough money to buy a small parcel of land at an auction. Angel began to log his land and grow sugar cane. As long as he was making a profit he continued to buy and clear more land. Over the years he managed to buy 1,000 hectares to the East of the small city of Bayamo. As well as sugar, he crop farmed the land with assorted vegetables, raising cattle, pigs and chickens while exporting wood as the main income.

The mother of the Castro children was Lena Ruez Gonzales, who was born in Finale de Rios Province, the Western most part of Cuba. Her poor family arrived at Biran farm looking for work. Angel hired them. Angel and the daughter Lena eventually fell in love here, and were married.

Over the years, the Castro family built a small town at Biran farm. Twenty seven facilities were built- a spacious one room school and a house for the teacher, a family doctor's house, clinic and small hospital, a pharmacy, a large general store, a butcher shop, a restaurant, a movie theatre, a farm management office, a machine shop and small saw mill, a cock fighting arena, a post and telegraph office, a bar and pool hall, a hotel and eventually a home and an office for the community lawyer, Fidel Castro. Eleven of the buildings remain standing to this day. Angel Castro built a self-sufficient community where all types of services were provided so that his workers and their families would not have to travel outside for anything. The community built a dozen small homes as the land was cleared and the farm was expanded. Many workers came to live in the community and they said Mr. And Mrs. Angel Castro were a very compassionate and humane couple.

The seven children all grew up thinking their life with school and medical care was quite normal.

In this community there was no Tempo Muerta “dead time” - dead time is a reference to time on the island outside the three months sugar cane harvest. It was a time when there was no work for many people elsewhere on the island and starvation was rampant. At Biran, there was crop farming and many other chores to do year round. All employees were paid fair wages. When Angel died the people said it was as if they had lost their own father.

Fidel and Raul grew up amongst all of this not as a result of communism or socialism but because of their family's “compassionism”.

When Fidel was ten years old his teacher said she could teach him no more (he was very bright and already well read). The family decided to send him to Santiago de Cuba, where Jesuit monks schooled him. He also excelled at sports. While traveling to and from school he saw others living in abject poverty and discussed this with his parents. As teens - Raul and Fidel discussed plans to build more farms based on the Biran concept.

A few years later he traveled back and forth to Law school in Habana. One holiday Christmas at home he expressed his concerns to his mother about the poverty, disease, starvation and unemployment he witnessed in his travels. He spoke of his now serious desire to extend the concept of his family's farm to other locations. His mother said, “why not all of Cuba?”

While attending law school he studied to see if there was some legal way to change the despicable US backed dictatorship government in Cuba. Nada! During that time, Fidel the national public speaking and debate champion, lead student protests against Batista. His brother Raul joined him as an organizer.

On two separate occasions while speaking on the stairs of the U-of-H Law Building he received a blow to the head by the police and a number of stitches. He was also jailed on those two occasions.

On July 26 1953, after leading 135 students in a failed attempt to procure weapons for a coup at the Moncada Barracks in Santiago he was jailed on what is now “The Isla de Juventud - The Island of the Youths”. He and Raul were then exiled to Mexico. They met Che and the rest is history.

It all started with Biran farm... the Semilla or Seed of the Revolution.

[Biran Tourist Attraction](#)