

Diez y Seis long a part of San Antonio history, celebrations

Two reports from yesteryear:

“Something like 8,000 of San Antonio’s Mexican citizens gathered at San Pedro springs in festive array last evening to celebrate the 87th recurrence of the day on which the patriot (Miguel) Hidalgo nailed his defy to tyranny on the doors of the governor’s palace in Guanajuato, under the very noses of the haughty Spanish dignitaries who mercilessly oppressed his lowly countrymen.

“The present celebration of the anniversary of Mexico’s declaration of independence promises to be the most successful held in many years. (It) was inaugurated as usual with pageantry yesterday afternoon at 6 p.m., and will continue for three days, coming to a close with pyrotechnics and climactic revelry.

“The parade yesterday afternoon was unusually long and full of striking features... It moved from the place of formation on Washington square in the following order:

“Mounted Police, Adjutants Miguel Gutierrez and Teodoro Rosales, Belknap Rifles, Band, Mexican Consul and President of the Junta in carriages, San Antonio Zouaves, Municipal Authorities, County Authorities, Invited Notabilities... (and the societies: Benevolencia, Mutualista, Union, Hidalgo, Morelos, and Gran Círculo de Obreros).

“Hundreds of people preceded the procession to the springs and many hundreds more arrived in rapid succession during the next few hours.

“The program of oratory and music which formally opened the celebration was begun with the singing of the Mexican national hymn by the various Mexican societies participating, which were grouped on the platform around their respective banners. The stirring words and swelling strains of the chorus evoked much patriotic ardor...

“The declaration of independence was then read, and Lino Sanchez, President of the Patriotic Junta, delivered the address of welcome.

“The orator of the day was Andres Lopez Montalbo, who delivered a most eloquent address on liberty.

“The next speech was by Antonio D. Flores, who paid glowing tribute to Hidalgo as patriot and an apostle of liberty. Mr. Flores first delivered his address in English and then in Spanish. He spoke as follows:

“Ladies and Gentlemen: Like the countries whose soil is blessed with the noble blood of immortal heroes who sacrificed their illustrious lives to better the condition of mankind,

Mexico has her day in glory. This day (and other Mexicans) joined the mighty effort of making man the sacred right of being self-governed...

“(These) are American (New World) principles... Washington and Hidalgo led their battalions to laurel mankind with the crown of the rights of man...”

“The oratorical exercises were closed with an address to young people by Abel Garcia...

“A salute of twenty-one cannons was then fired in honor of Mexican independence and the festivities began.

“The park was ablaze with electric lights and the flare of hundreds of many-hued lanterns and the gorgeous Mexican colors floated everywhere. There were dozen chile stands quaintly decorated with streamers, festoons of bright ribbons and strands of lace, where the gaily dressed crowds feasted with laughter and merry talk.

“All this, together with floating strains of languorous music made the scene a typical Mexican one, and it was a reproduction in miniature of the celebrations going on at Saltillo, Monterrey, or the City of Mexico...

“The program (of the third day) at San Pedro springs was carried out as originally proposed and the evening was passed most pleasantly. The park was thronged with patriotic Mexicans and scores of their American friends. The feature of the evening’s entertainment were speeches by representatives from the Union and Hidalgo societies which were in a patriotic vein and received great applause.

“After the speeches a most enjoyable ball was given in the pavilion and it was at a late hour when the last number on the program was danced.”

These are notes from the San Antonio Daily Express, dated Sept. 16 and 18, 1897. The earliest reference in the newspaper I could find to *Diez y Seis* festivities was for 1869.

Of course, the original *Diez y Seis* (1810) evoked an armed rebellion here against the Spanish authorities two years later.

Obviously, *Diez y Seis* has been part of our city for quite a while.