

1808
1809

Los Sitios de Zaragoza

The Sieges in the Rabal district

During the Sieges of 1808 and 1809, the Arrabal estate house hardly occupied the space, today bordered by the streets: Calle Sixto Celorrio, Calle Valle de Zuriza and Calle Matilde Sangüesa, in addition to the outer walls of the Jesús convent.



Postcard published to celebrate the centennial of the Sieges of Zaragoza, 1908. Nuestra Señora de Jesús convent. Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza, 4-1_0163067.

In the first Siege, the French did not completely surround the city, since they did not have enough forces to occupy the left Ebro riverbank. Due to this, they were limited to maintaining several cavalry forces and to make limited skirmishes with small forces. This meant that the Zaragoza defenders had the option to enter and depart from the city and receive supplies and reinforcements by means of the stone bridge, which hindered the fall of the Capital city. However in the second Siege, the French were already aware of the Rabal district's importance in the city's defence and for months, they tightened the circle in this zone until their definitive attack on 18 February 1809. The Arrabal defenders surrendered and the city capitulated two days later.

THE CONVENTS, KEY SITES IN THE DEFENCE

The defence of the Rabal district was structured around three convents which were built in the zone and converted into formidable bastions.

The Convent of Nuestra Señora de Jesús was located in the current square with the same name. It was "situated on the left side of the Ebro River", almost at the height of the of the bridge called



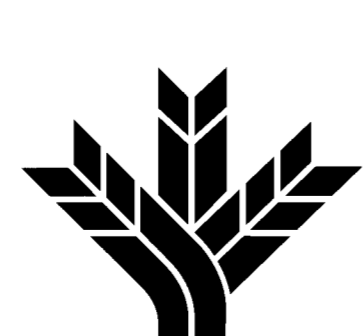
Convento de San Lázaro a orillas del río Ebro.

Puente de Tablas in the Zaragoza Arrabal district (Cf. María del Carmen Sobrón, *Impacto de la desamortización de Mendizábal en el paisaje urbano de Zaragoza (Impact of the Ecclesiastic Confiscation of Mendizábal in the urban landscape of Zaragoza)*, Zaragoza, 2004, p. 272). When the war and years of French government concluded, the community which had been obliged to abandon their home, returned to it and rebuilt what was necessary to continue performing their religious life.

The Convent of Nuestra Señora de Altabás was built in front of the stone bridge, founded by Juana de Reus in 1557, of which some wall sections are conserved and the church with the same name. It was destroyed along with its church by the blasting of the last arch of the stone bridge in the sieges which Zaragoza suffered in 1808 and 1809 but it was rebuilt several times in the new site which it now occupies at the present time.



English
Français
Mapa/Map/Carte



CAJA RURAL
DE ARAGÓN



Zaragoza
AYUNTAMIENTO

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The streets of today's Arrabal neighbourhood still conserve practically the same urban structure as the period of the Sieges. The street called Calle del Horno, the square: Plaza de la Mesa, the alley: Callejón del Tío Lucas, Calle de Jorge Ibort, Calle de Villacampa or the Tío Jorge park, remind us of the deeds and main characters of the sieges.



Ruinas de Zaragoza 1808 y 1809. El Tío Jorge. Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza, 4-1_03594.

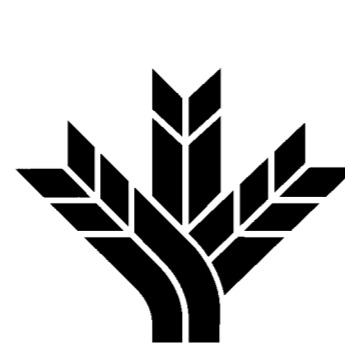
EL TÍO JORGE

Jorge Ibort y Casamayor (Zaragoza, 1755-1808), son of Nicolás Ibort, native of Zaragoza, and of María Casamayor, native of La Puebla de Híjar. He was better known as Uncle Jorge or “Cuello Corto” (“Short neck”), due to his stocky figure, thick head and medium size. Despite what has always been believed, the investigations by Antonio Peiró have concluded that his activity was not agricultural production destined for consumption. His activity was different: he shared the ownership of an “empeltre” nursery (an olive tree variety). He was also the owner of cavalry horses.

He was one of the participants in the city uprising in May 1808 against the submission orders from the French forces which had arrived from Madrid. This man from the Arrabal district exercised some authority over his neighbours since he was one of the few who knew how to read and write. Always loyal to Palafox, he was appointed commander of the general's escort and honour guard; it is said, participating with him in combat missions in Alagón, Épila and Casablanca. Palafox appointed him as Captain of the Arrabal Shotgunners Company, due to the merits he had earned on the field of battle, and subsequently, he promoted him again to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He died on 15 November 1808 in the Altabás parish church, of inflammatory putrid fever. He was buried the next day at the chapel of the Lazán house, by express desire of Palafox. He was 53 years old.



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