



**Juan del Castillo**

The first Hispanic women formally admitted into the modern Coast Guard began serving in 1942 as members of the SPARs. Their ranks included several Hispanic female officers and dozens of enlisted personnel. The role of women in the service decreased after World War II, but rebounded in the 1970s and 1980s as women

began to serve on board cutters, attend the Academy and take a more active role in the service. For example, the first two Hispanic females graduated from the Academy in 1983. In 1991, Katherine Tiongson (nee-Faverey) took command of cutter *Bainbridge Island*, becoming the first Hispanic American female to command a cutter and Marilyn Melendez Dykman earned her Wings of Gold to become the service's first Hispanic female aviator. Since the 1990s, Hispanic American women have reached the senior officer and enlisted ranks.

Pioneering work by Hispanic Americans since World War II paved the way for officers in recent years. In 2006, Rear Admiral Ronald Rábago became the first Hispanic flag officer and, in 2009, Rear Admiral Joseph "Pepe" Castillo assumed command of Coast Guard District 11, becoming the first Hispanic district commander. Castillo achieved an even greater senior officer level when he became the deputy commander of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area.

Hispanic Americans have served with distinction in the Coast Guard since the 1820s. These personnel pioneered the way ahead for all minorities and their efforts have benefitted all who serve in the U.S. military, federal government, and the nation as a whole.



**Marilyn M. Dykman**

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**Rear Admiral Joseph**  
**"Pepe" Castillo (Ret. )**

**Front Cover: Rear Admiral**  
**Ronald Rábago (Ret. )**



## ***Pioneers of Diversity: Hispanic Americans in the United States Coast Guard***



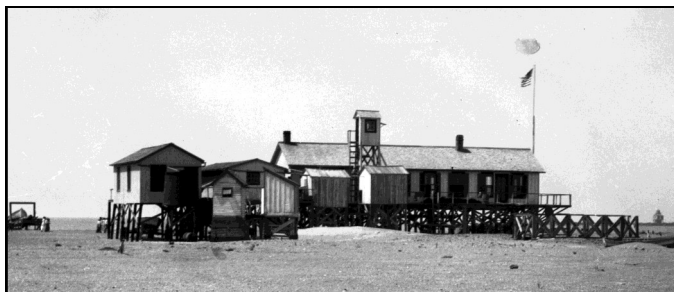
## Hispanic American Service since 1820

Hispanic Americans have served in the United States Coast Guard for nearly 200 years; most of the lifespan of the modern Coast Guard and its predecessor services. In this time, Hispanic Americans have come a long way, persevering with a dedication to the service that has benefitted all who serve in it.

In 1821, Florida became a U.S. territory, one of several Spanish territories that would come under U.S. control or sphere of influence during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1824 to 1845, Juan Andreu served as the keeper of the St. Augustine Lighthouse. Of Minorcan ancestry, he was the first Hispanic American to serve in the Coast Guard and the first Hispanic to oversee a federal installation of any kind. In 1843, Joseph Ximenez of Key West assumed control of the Carysfort Reef Lightship, making him the first Hispanic American to oversee a Coast Guard vessel. And, from 1859 to 1862, Maria Mestre de los Dolores served as



Old St. Augustine Lighthouse

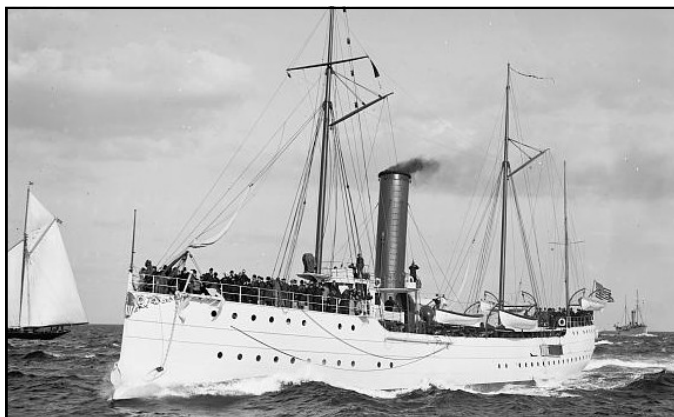


**The Brazos (Texas) Life-Saving Station**

the keeper of the St. Augustine Lighthouse, becoming the first Hispanic American woman to serve in the Coast Guard and to oversee a federal shore installation.

During the remainder of the nineteenth century, Hispanic Americans served on board revenue cutters and manned many lighthouses in Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana. War has tended to alter the service's ethnic make-up and it did so in the 1898 Spanish American War, expanding lighthouse service oversight to light stations in Cuba and Puerto Rico. These installations brought more Hispanic personnel into the lighthouse service, while the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service recruited more Hispanic personnel to serve on its cutters. For example, by 1915, the Puerto Rico-based *Algonquin* enjoyed the unusually high proportion of twenty-five percent Hispanic crewmembers on board the cutter.

Like the other predecessor services, the United States Life-Saving Service provided many opportunities for Hispanic Americans personnel. Surfmen, such as Telesford Pena and

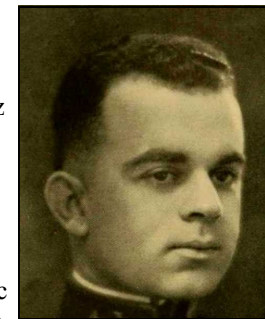


Coast Guard Cutter *Algonquin*

Ramon Delgado, served at Gulf stations in the 1890s and many more did so during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In September 1919, Brazos Station crewmen Boatswain's Mate Pablo Valent and Surfman Indalecio Lopez helped rescue the crew of the schooner *Cape Horn*. For their heroic effort, Valent and Lopez received the Silver Lifesaving Medal and the prestigious Grand Cross of the American Cross of Honor Society. They were the first Hispanic Americans to receive them. In his 28-year career, Valent went on to achieve the rank of chief petty officer and assumed command of the Brazos Station, becoming the first Hispanic to oversee a Coast Guard rescue station.

In 1928, Puerto Rican-born Henry Garcia received a Coast Guard commission to become the first "recognized" minority officer in the Service. And, in 1938, he assumed command of Cutter *Morris*, to become the first Hispanic-American cutter captain.

The Second World War accelerated the advancement of minorities. The draft greatly increased minority proportions in enlisted rates and Hispanic Americans began to fill more officer billets. In 1942, Juan del Castillo completed Reserve Officer Training to become the first Hispanic American officer in the service. War veteran John Gazzo Martinez entered the Coast Guard Academy in 1947 and became the first known Hispanic graduate of that institution.



Henry Garcia