



The secret The Spanish Inquisition in Old St. Augustine 2012-11-23

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By [LEE WEAVER](#)

Special to The Record

I had recently finished a weekend run of performances of my One-Man Show, "Piercing the Darkness," my original play about the City of St. Augustine from 1513 to the present day. In it I portray three different light keepers from our own well-beloved, historically-registered monument, the St. Augustine Lighthouse. An acquaintance who was active in the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society (SAJHS) asked if I, in my research, had found any Jewish persons that could be mentioned in my play. I told him that I hadn't, though there may well have been.

I thought about "writing in" a new character; but I knew I could not. My three narrators were fictitious, but the stories they told were factually accurate. I would, however, continue the search.

When I asked him what was behind his question he explained that the SAJHS believed that the first Jews to come to America arrived considerably earlier than 1654 in New Amsterdam, N.Y., their earliest recorded arrival date. The SAJHS believed Jews were probably on board one or more of the several Menendez ships in 1565.

That notion made perfect sense to me. Thousands upon thousands of Spaniards and others were fleeing Spain for their lives in the mid-16th century; fleeing The Spanish Inquisition — however they could go, to whatever destination they might, by whatever means available, they fled. Some, called Conversos, converted to Christianity. Others, called Maranos (a defamatory term), only pretended to be Christians. This pretense, if discovered, could result in torture and/or death.

I studied The Spanish Inquisition. I talked with persons in the SAJHS. I consulted with three rabbis and several Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy. After much consideration I

began to write "The Secret" - a tale of the Spanish Inquisition in Old St. Augustine - a tale of Flight on the high Seas - a tale of Menendez' landing in Florida - a tale of hiding and discovery - of love and family - of survival, intolerance, life, death, fear and love.

All the ingredients were there. The next step was a plot and it appeared suddenly, with a life of its own. I only had to direct its movement. The central characters were fleshing themselves out.

Next would come their understanding of Micah's (Old Testament Prophet) instruction about Justice, Mercy and Humility. The Apostle Paul's "Fruits of the Spirit" would likewise come into play/the "play". Could these scriptures support or tear down the Inquisition. Could they usher in a new way of life in Old St. Augustine?

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