

Eva Peron – From Humble Beginnings to First Lady (Part 1)

A crowd assembles in the square outside a huge, pink palace. There is the sound of accordions, tango rhythm and popular songs. A woman in a fine dress emerges onto the balcony and begins to address the adoring mass. She breaks into song: “Don’t Cry for Me Argentina.” The song moves from a plaintive near whisper to a full-bodied ballad in which the woman sings of her love for her country and its people. The courtyard below breaks into rapturous applause. The elegant figure takes her leave. All is well.

This all sounds like a fairy tale. Frankly, it is one. It’s a scene from the 1976 musical “Evita.” None of it really happened, but the people in it really did exist. This is a story about great figures of the 20th century, a century of upheaval and innovation. The country is Argentina, a long, narrow country named for a legendary land of silver. The pink palace is the Casa Rosada, an imposing mansion that houses Argentina’s president. And the woman singing on the balcony is his wife, Eva Peron.

Humble Beginnings

Eva’s life is a real rags to riches story. In many ways, the truth of her life is even more remarkable than a fairy tale. She was born in a small town on the Argentine Pampas. The Pampas are the vast lowland plains that cover the eastern coastline of Argentina. The capital city, Buenos Aires, is situated in the

north east of this region. This city is famous for its eclectic architecture and rich cultural heritage.

But Eva's hometown was far from all of this. She came into the world on May 7, 1919, in the town of Los Toldos. Her father was relatively wealthy, but he had another family. When he died, Eva's mother and the five children had to fend for themselves. This was an important moment for Eva. The rich, also known as the upper classes, shunned her and her siblings. We will see that relations between the rich and the poor remained important to her throughout her life.

Marriage

Eva was talented and charismatic. She could ingratiate herself with people and she was a natural leader. Above all, she was ambitious to overcome the limitations of her upbringing and earn her place in the ruling class. Perhaps she felt like this was her due. In any event, she moved to the capital city to work. There's nothing particularly unusual about this. Young adults often move from rural areas to large cities, especially in difficult times when money is scarce. The 1930s were such a time.

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