

MIGRATION, MARGINALIZATION, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 1900-1939

Between 1900 and 1939, the Mexican community grew as push and pull factors brought waves of new residents to the Phoenix area. These individuals arrived from Mexico, from nearby states like Texas or New Mexico, and from smaller towns in Arizona. As the community developed, it experienced social, political, economic and geographic marginalization as the Anglo population increased in size and power. Phoenicians of Mexican descent, along with Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans, experienced growing prejudice and discrimination. They resided in separate neighborhoods from Anglos, encountered growing segregation practices in public accommodations, and had little voice in the political development of the City. The Hispanic community would come together to address these problems, and continue to hold to cultural traditions, while participating in mainstream culture as Americans. According to the U.S. census, the number of Phoenicians of Mexican descent hovered around 10-15 percent of the total population within the city limits during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. The true number of Hispanics in the area of the present-day city of Phoenix was actually larger due to the fact that many Mexican families between the 1920s and the 1940s lived outside the city limits and thus were not counted by city-defined census figures.

Phoenix Population 1900-1940⁵⁹

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Total Population	5,544	11,134	29,053	48,118	65,414
Hispanics	802	1,100	2,323	7,293	9,740
Percent of Total	14%	10%	8%	15%	15%

Residential Development

The kernels of several Mexican American neighborhoods, referred to hereafter as “barrios,” had formed prior to 1900, such as the east Monroe Street neighborhood and the residential areas west of Central Avenue. During the 1910s and the 1920s, these little communities grew and blossomed, along with a number of other barrios planted inside and outside the town limits. These barrios became more isolated from the Anglo community as socio-economic divisions deepened.⁶⁰

An accelerated migration of families from Mexico into the Phoenix area in the 1910s occurred when the cotton industry boomed in Phoenix and throughout central and southern Arizona. During World War I, the Arizona Cotton Growers Association and railroad interests began recruiting workers from Mexico. This, coupled with the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Mexican nationals from Mexico during the revolution, increased the number of Mexicans migrating

⁵⁹ U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population, 1900-1940*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office). Estimates based on analyzing Maricopa County and Phoenix census figures for 1930 to 1950 lead to the conclusion that that the population in the current study area may have been an additional 8 percent of Hispanics each year in relation to the total population. Doing a comprehensive census analysis is well beyond the scope of this project and so the figures cited in the historic context narrative reflect Phoenix city limit census counts only.

⁶⁰ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 2; Rosales, 16.

to Phoenix and the Valley. In fact, between 1900 and 1920, over 47,000 Hispanics settled in Arizona. As in earlier years, this migration to Phoenix did not include only those from Mexico. Mexicans and Mexican Americans arrived from other states, many following the seasonal agricultural labor path. Others came from areas throughout Arizona, especially the mining towns, in search of work. Most of the members of the Mexican American community during the 1920s belonged to the working class, with a small number attaining middle class status.⁶¹



Race-coded Phoenix map, 1937. Orange marks the location of Mexican residents, yellow for Anglos, and green for Blacks living within the city limits of Phoenix. Office of the City Engineer, City of Phoenix, February 1937.

While large concentrations of Spanish-surnamed people lived in particular areas, some neighborhoods contained ethnically diverse residents. In the city limits, Chinese Americans lived in mixed neighborhoods with Hispanic families, while African American neighborhoods tended towards separation (although some residential intermixing occurred). Chinese Americans located their grocery stores in Mexican neighborhoods, and provided important retail services like credit for purchasing goods and services. Lower-income Anglo families were scattered throughout the barrios, and some Anglos also owned grocery stores in mainly Mexican neighborhoods, such as the Powell Grocery store across from the Mexican Presbyterian Church at 623 S. 2nd Avenue.⁶²

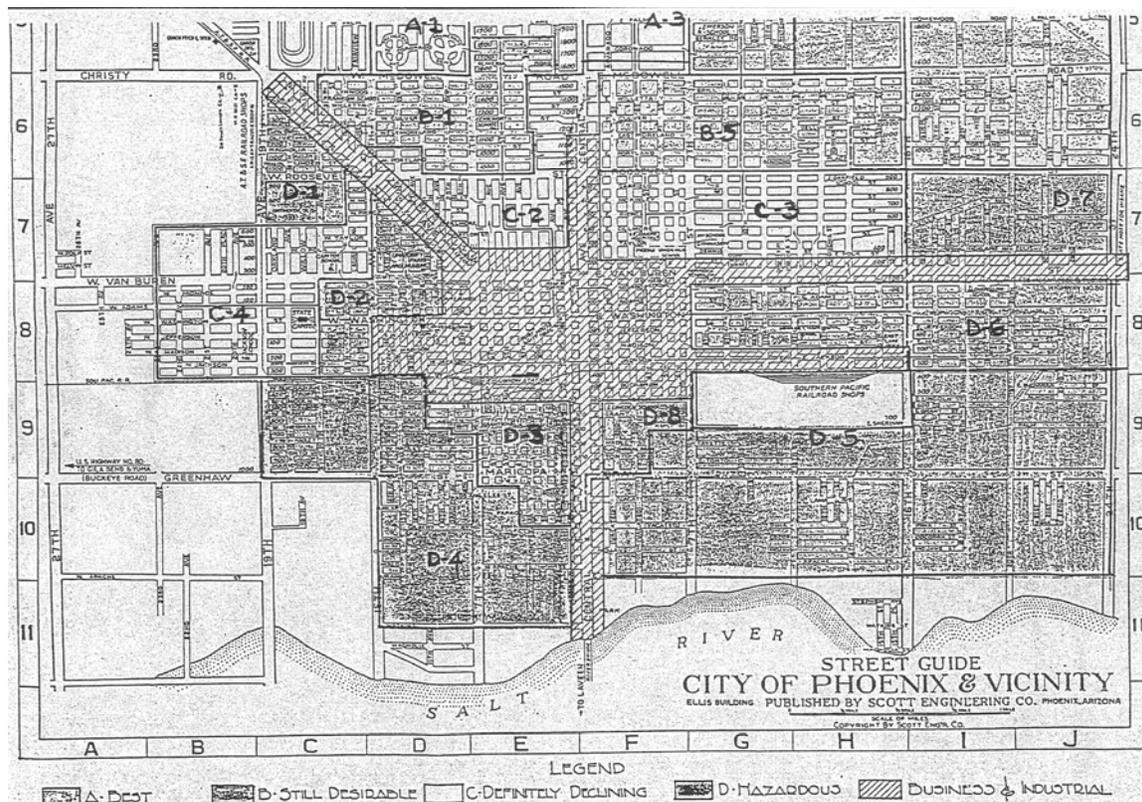
It was also during the period of the 1910s through the 1930s that racial lines were drawn more clearly in Phoenix through real estate decisions, redlining, and race-restrictive housing covenants.

⁶¹ Dimas, 35; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 37-39; Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

⁶² Reynolds, "We Made Our life," 32-33.

Minority groups, whose numbers were increasing, tended to settle south of Van Buren Street, as they were generally unable to purchase homes north of Van Buren until well after the 1940s. Established in the 1930s, the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) created national standards for determining property values, which in part took into consideration the racial profile of nearby residents. In Phoenix, the properties in the northern half of the city excluded the "detrimental races and nationalities," of which African Americans and Mexican Americans ranked ninth and tenth respectively on the real estate scale. The HOLC withheld loans to residents in neighborhoods south of Van Buren because these areas were rated as "hazardous." Therefore not only were people of color excluded from Phoenix neighborhoods north of downtown and new FHA housing, but these practices hindered any future economic growth and development of minority neighborhoods in Phoenix.⁶³

This racial division in Phoenix is marked on a 1935 Phoenix Realty Map, which grades the "security" of various real estate areas in the city, placing the neighborhoods where both primarily people of color and poor Anglos lived, under the "hazardous" heading. Socially, many Mexican American children grew up knowing that it was taboo to cross Van Buren Street and wander into the mainly white neighborhoods of the northern part of the city, unless they had a job to do.



Home Owners' Loan Corporation Realty Map for Phoenix, 1935, which ranks "grades of security" for property in the city.

⁶³ Linda Brunk, "A Federal Legacy: Phoenix's Cultural Geography," *Palo Verde* Vol 4: no 1 (Spring 1996), 60-65, 67.

Interestingly, there existed pockets of primarily Mexican American homes that developed north of Van Buren Street, in today's Garfield neighborhood. This settlement pattern, an exception rather than the rule, suggests that Hispanic settlements were not always confined to the south side of town but also existed on the perimeter. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, a small group of middle class Mexican Americans purchased scattered lots and homes in today's Garfield Neighborhood, between 7th to 16th Streets, from Van Buren to Roosevelt Streets. Two main areas of settlement formed, in the Verde Park area from 9th to 13th Streets, Taylor to Van Buren Streets; and another enclave at 8th to 9th Streets, Roosevelt south to McKinley Streets. A few families lived near 16th and Roosevelt Streets. The Garfield neighborhood, one of the first subdivisions developed outside of the original town site, developed in 1883 with the first residential area between Van Buren and Roosevelt Streets, in a subdivision named for early homesteader John T. Dennis. Later subdivisions in the neighborhood resulted from speculators who invested in small scale residential development in response to the population growth from 1911 to the 1930s. It seems unusual that Mexican residents lived north of Van Buren Street and north of the primary area for barrios. Charlie Garcia, who lived near 11th and Taylor Streets since the 1930s, remembers that most people in the area were Anglo. It is unknown if these subdivisions carried racially restricted covenants. The entire "Garfield" district evolved into a primarily Hispanic neighborhood by the 1980s.⁶⁴

For the majority of the community, though, Mexican neighborhoods formed south of Van Buren Street. For example, Martin Gold, a Yugoslavian immigrant, purchased a great deal of property in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1910s he developed the "Gold Alley" area, a residential and business section located between Madison and Jackson Streets, between 5th and 7th Streets, now replaced by Chase Field. Gold married into the Hispanic community and the Gold Alley became a middle class Hispanic neighborhood, with a few Chinese Americans



Looking east on Gold Alley, 1914.
Courtesy of Frank Barrios

and other immigrant families. Gold Alley was located just west of "Chinatown." Beginning in the 1920s, a scattering of Mexican residential areas developed between 7th and 20th Streets, with Van Buren Street on the north and Jackson Street on the south. These neighborhoods eventually became identified with nearby parks, such as Eastlake Park and Madison Park. Mexican American families living along 9th Street from Van Buren to Jackson Streets called their area *Calle Nueve*, and many of the residents in this area were small-business owners. Settlements appeared near 20th,

⁶⁴ "Garfield Neighborhood Plan," 1992, City of Phoenix; *Phoenix Gazette* January 19, 1983; Charlie Garcia, telephone interview by Jean Reynolds, June 25, 2006.

32nd, and 40th Streets as well. All of the Mexican families living in this general area were intermixed with Anglo Americans, Chinese American merchants, and African American families living east of 7th Street during this period. Both long-time Mexican American and African American residents remember that this area was racially mixed in general.⁶⁵

The area indicating the largest percentage of the Mexican community from the 1920s until at least the 1960s was located south of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. At the time of settlement, most of this area was outside the city limits. During the 1920s, new barrios developed here, extending from 7th Avenue to 24th Street. These barrios began as small pockets of settlements, some more rural in nature than others, and as more people settled in the area, each barrio grew larger. Some older barrios eventually split into smaller neighborhoods, each with a separate identity and with a great sense of loyalty attached to these barrios. Many of the families who settled in rural barrios leased their land from other property owners. They improved the land to make it suitable for farming, planted crops, and hired other Mexicans as farmhands. For example, the Calles family had small farm near 7th Avenue and Buckeye Road, where they raised goats and sheep.⁶⁶

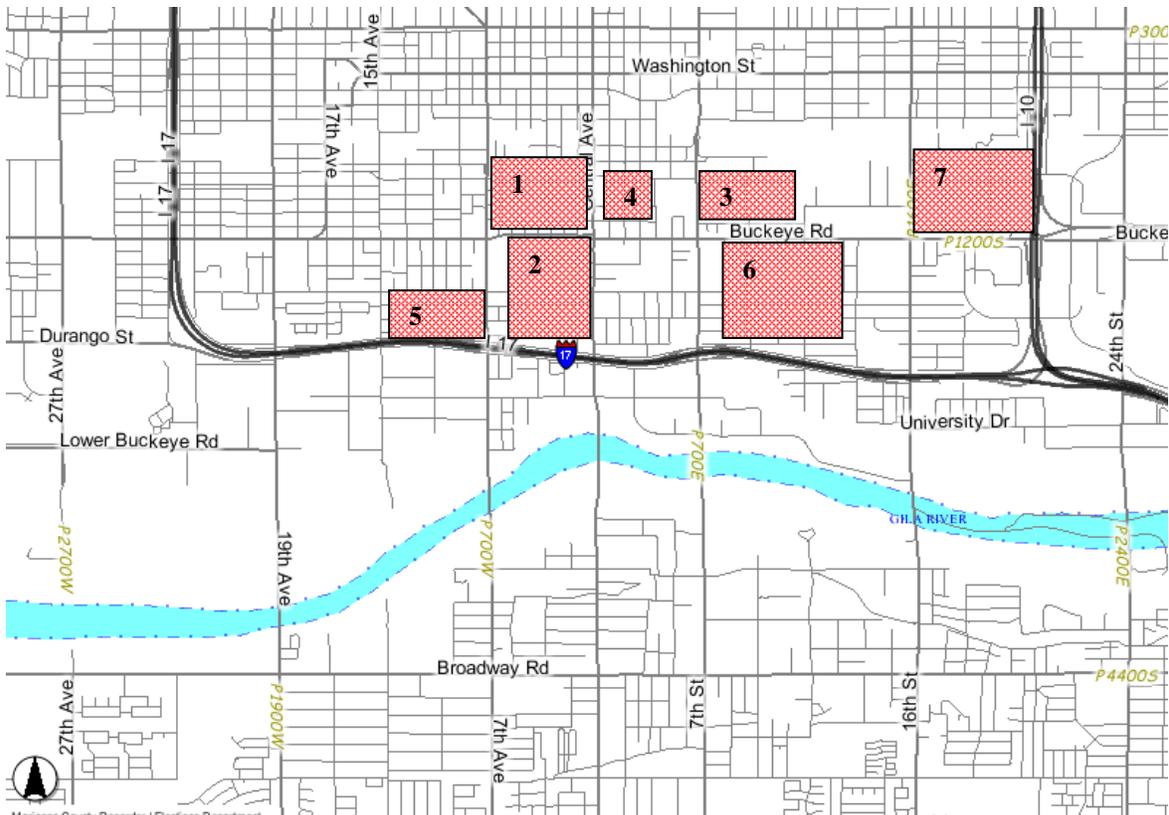
Other residents settled in these neighborhoods to operate small businesses. The growth of the tourist industry during the 1920s and 1930s also provided working-class residents with service industry jobs in the downtown area of Phoenix. Those who worked in the industrial sections of Phoenix, in agriculture, or in service industries, tended to live in the affordable neighborhoods closest to their occupations. Certain sections of these barrios contained better homes, but generally Mexicans could afford only substandard housing.⁶⁷ One study, based on a number of oral histories with *ancianos* (seniors) from Phoenix, describes these early barrios: "Their appearance was basically rural-Mexican in nature, i.e., small houses lying in open fields, in former *sembrados*, or adjacent to growing fields. More elaborate houses, some of adobe, were gradually built, many in stages as the economics of the people would allow . . . The majority of the residents of all these barrios would go out to work daily in the fields all over the Valley."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Frank Barrios, "The Golds of Gold Alley," *Journal of Arizona History*, Autumn 2001, Vol 42, no 3, 305- 6; David Dean and Jean Reynolds, *City of Phoenix African American Historic Property Survey*, (Phoenix: Historic Preservation Office, 2004), 13; Lilia Holguin Interview, by Anna Glenn, November 9, 2002, Phoenix, Arizona; Hispanic Historic Property Survey (HHPS) Community Outreach surveys helped determine boundaries of this area.

⁶⁶ Fernando Diaz, Interview by Jean Reynolds, May 11, 1998, tape recording.

⁶⁷ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 2; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 33.

⁶⁸ Montiel, Miguel, *Paint Inhalation Among Chicano Barrio Youth: An Exploratory Study*. (Phoenix: Valle del Sol Inc, 1976), 23-24, 39, 134-135; "Sembrado" means "cultivated fields" and "jacalitos" means "little shacks."



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|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Grant Park | 5. La Sonorita |
| 2. Harmon Park / Los Marcos de Niza | 6. Cuatro Milpas |
| 3. El Campito | 7. Golden Gate |
| 4. Central Park | |

Largest Barrios in Phoenix, 1910-1950

The Golden Gate barrio, although it no longer exists today, has a long history. In 1868, Gordon Wilson purchased two sections of land near 24th Street and Buckeye Road. Other settlers from New Jersey, Kentucky, and Alabama soon filed their homestead claims nearby. In 1886 M. H. Collins, an early developer, started a subdivision in the area, which eventually transformed into a Mexican neighborhood by 1920. Golden Gate was initially bounded north and south by the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and Buckeye Road [then known as Henshaw Road], and east and west by 20th and 16th Streets. One of the first families to locate in Golden Gate was the Valenzuela family. Having fled the Mexican Revolution of 1910, they began farming on 40 acres. Apparently very successful, they built a fence around the property with a metal gate. According to one story, the front gate of the Valenzuela property facing 16th Street was made of tin. This front gate became a metaphor for the Valenzuela's prosperity and poorer Mexicans began saying that the Valenzuela house had a front gate that was made of gold: the Valenzuela's house had a "puerta de oro." English-speaking farmers translated the name to Golden Gate. The nearby Encinas family also owned an 18-acre farm. Long-time resident and community leader Pete Ávila first came to Golden Gate from Tumacácori, Arizona in 1921 and remembered the original resident to be María González. A

1929 land ownership maps shows a Golden Gate Place subdivision bounded approximately from 16th to 20th Streets, Lincoln to Hadley Streets.⁶⁹

Golden Gate, like other nearby barrios, became a magnet for Mexican families seeking a better life than could be found in southern Arizona and Mexico. Many of these families worked on farms and packing sheds throughout the Valley. Pete Ávila recalled that by 1930 farm land was being subdivided, and in particular, land owner Victor Steinegger provided fairly inexpensive lots for the residents. He also wanted a Catholic church for the barrio residents. According to one source, the Golden Gate neighborhood had 6,000 residents by 1935, mostly originating from Mexico.⁷⁰ In the barrio, some families made their homes out of scrap materials and adobe, while others rented two-room homes. The streets were unpaved, and the area lacked sewer or water facilities. Water came from wells, while family members collected or purchased wood for heating and cooking. The barrio later spread from 16th to 24th Streets.⁷¹

Other Hispanic barrios were established at this time. *Cuatro Milpas* started in the mid-1920s. The area was originally farmland owned by several families, encompassing four large parcels, thus the name “*Cuatro Milpas*” (also called *Las Milpas*) or “four fields.” One of these families, the Grijalvas,



Mexican family in Phoenix, c. 1915.
Courtesy of Frank Barrios.

owned a small dairy with a few head of milk cows. This barrio initially formed roughly between Buckeye Road and Mohave Street, 12th Street to 13th Place. The earliest adobe homes can be found in this area, as well as small businesses. To the west of this area, from 7th to 11th Streets there existed a racially restricted area which only allowed Anglos. Surrounding the core of this barrio were agricultural areas and scattered residences. Families living in this area planted and harvested corn, or *maize*, and cornfields grew in abundance. During the 1930s to the 1950s, this highly rural barrio eventually expanded from Buckeye Road to Durango Street, 7th to 16th Streets, and became integrated.⁷²

⁶⁹ “Community History” (Wilson School) from: www.asu.edu/caed/HCDE/herberger/publications/wilson-03background.pdf hereafter “Community History” (Wilson School); Katie Valenzuela Macias, Telephone interview by Christine Marin, March 21, 2006.

⁷⁰ Pete Ávila and Elvira Ávila, interview by Hispanic Oral History Project, 1976, Tape recording, School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, Tempe; “Community History” (Wilson School).

⁷¹ Dimas, 102.

⁷² Katie Valenzuela Macias telephone interview; Velia Fernandez, Interview by Lucas Cabrera, June 5, 2002; Helen Brock, Interview by Lucas Cabrera, September 5, 2002; Eileen Johnston, Interview by Lucas Cabrera and Mike Valdez, 2002; Mary and Manny Garcia, Interview by Jean Reynolds, March 25, 2006.

El Campito neighborhood began around 1927. The neighborhood developed from 7th to 16th Streets, Lincoln Street on the north, and Buckeye Road on the south.⁷³ The area acquired its name because of all the mesquite trees that thrived in the area, and the tramps, or hobos, getting off the train in south Phoenix to camp underneath these mesquite trees. There were many of these destitute men, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s. They begged for food or for work from the Mexican families living in the area. Many Mexican families living there in their tents were also poor, and they lived on the meager crops they managed to harvest. The nightly fires of the vagrant campsites gave the appearance that everyone lived outdoors, within their “little camps,” or *campitos*.⁷⁴

Within *El Campito* is a smaller barrio known as “Little Hollywood.” One long-time resident believed that the name “Little Hollywood” came about because many of the Mexicans living in this area always dressed in white clothing, and tried to appear more sophisticated and “better off” than others. Another long-time resident suggested that the name evolved as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the fact that *El Campito* was one of the poorest barrios in the area and many families resided in very poorly constructed homes. Another possible connection to the name “Hollywood” might be the Hollywood Heights subdivision northeast of this area, located north of Harrison Street between 20th to 22nd Streets. Whatever the origin of the name, it was a generally impoverished area, where people built their own homes on rented lots, adding rooms when needed and making adobes from the soil in their own yards. Located outside of the city limits, the area was rural. Wells were the only source of water. Families were attracted to *El Campito* because the land was very cheap, and the absence of building codes in the area allowed people to build what they wanted. All of the rural barrios east of Central Avenue remained out of the city limits until they were annexed in 1959.⁷⁵

Another barrio in the 1920s was known as *La Patria*, bounded by the railroad tracks on the north, Buckeye Road on the south, 2nd to 7th Streets. The community was primarily Mexican but included some Anglo families and at least one African American family. One long-time resident remembered that “We had Carver School smack dab within our barrio, and in fact, the only cement in the area was the sidewalk in front of Carver. [A large part of] the barrio ceased to exist when the property was bought out by Coors Company around 1965.” Between 1918 and the 1920s, the Southwest Cotton Company operated just east of Carver High School, where many of the Mexican families in the barrio worked. Some of the older families lived in the brick homes still located along 3rd and Grant Streets. The old Linville (Central Park) area was located just west of this neighborhood, between 2nd Street and Central Avenue.⁷⁶

Grant Park is the oldest barrio west of Central Avenue, known in its earliest years as *La Palestina*. It continued to develop in the 1910s through the 1930s. One study says that *La Palestina* (Central to 15th Avenue, Buckeye Road to north past the railroad tracks) formed around 1915. The name may have come from La Palestina Grocery, located at 4th Avenue and Grant Street, owned by Jose

⁷³ Jon Aumann, Mary Hernandez, Manuel Medina, Cheryl Stewart and Nancy Wherley, *The Chicano Addict: an Analysis of Factors Influencing Rehabilitation in a Treatment and Prevention Program* (M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1972), 34.

⁷⁴ Katie Valenzuela Macias telephone interview.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*; Don Ryden, *Pre-1950 Historic Residential Resources Reconnaissance Survey Report*, (City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office, 1990), 44.

⁷⁶ Bob Ramirez HHPS survey.

Figuroa prior to 1917. This fits with the ethnic development of the area, since property records show that by 1916, a large amount of the land in the Grant Park area was owned by Spanish-surnamed individuals, purchased through John T. Dunlap, who owned and mortgaged a great deal of land throughout Phoenix.⁷⁷

Residents remember Anglo families living along 1st and 2nd Avenues, until they began to move north as the city expanded beginning in the 1920s. During the first four decades of the twentieth century more families of Mexican descent continued to move into the *La Palestina* neighborhood, with some Chinese American and African American families settling there as well. Interaction between racial groups did occur, especially between the Chinese and Mexican residents. The children played together, and Chinese grocers learned Spanish in order to operate their businesses successfully. In fact, in most of the barrios merchants of Chinese descent spoke Spanish fluently and were an integral part of the neighborhood.⁷⁸

Manuel Gomez, who was born on South 6th Avenue in the late 1880s, met Francisca Calles at a house party in the neighborhood. She was born in Tucson around 1891. When her parents divorced, Francisca came to Phoenix with her father as a small child. Before she married Manuel, she worked at Donofrio's in Phoenix as a candy dipper in the chocolate factory. Francisca and Manuel were married around 1915 and two years later had their first of nine children. One of their sons, Mike Gomez, grew up in the Grant Park area in the 1920s and 1930s. Mike recalled his

childhood neighborhood: "We didn't have pavement. Concrete sidewalks, we didn't have that, it was just gravel. It was a mixture of races. We had Black families, we had Anglo families, and the Hispanics, the Mexicanos . . . I think we were all more or less in the same type of financial level . . . I wouldn't say that we were dirt poor but we were poor."⁷⁹ The Mullers are another long-time family in *La Palestina* neighborhood. In 2006, Amada Muller still lived in the home her parents built in 1927, located at 1007 S. 2nd Avenue. Her father, Ramon, was a tailor and worked at a shop in downtown Phoenix. Amada grew up in the Grant Park community and graduated from Phoenix Union High in 1938. She worked at Phoenix Laundry and in 1952, took a job with *Arizona Highways Magazine*.⁸⁰



Godinez family at home on 1018 S. 5th Avenue, in 1916.
History of the Grant Park Neighborhood

Also in the 1910s, another barrio developed, known as *El Mesquital* (the mesquite grove), bounded roughly by Central Avenue west to 15th Avenue, Buckeye Road south to Watkins Road. This older neighborhood would eventually split into smaller barrios. The neighborhood west of 7th Avenue became *La Sonorita* barrio. *La Sonorita* was bordered by 7th Avenue on the east, 15th Avenue on the

⁷⁷ Montiel, 24-25; Irma Cordova HHPS survey; Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 3.

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

west, Pima Road on the north, and by Apache Street on the south.⁸¹ The name most likely evolved from a subdivision called Sonora Place, which existed since at least 1929 east of 15th Avenue, between Pima and Apache Streets. Eventually, a smaller neighborhood called Maravilla Gardens emerged between 11th and 16th Avenues, Grant Street to Buckeye Roads. Between 7th and Central Avenues, south of Buckeye Road, was another barrio, whose name is unknown. This small neighborhood transformed from a rural barrio into its current residential landscape when Father Emmett McLoughlin helped establish the Marcos de Niza Housing Project in 1941. The remaining area not included in the housing project came to be known as the Harmon Park neighborhood.⁸²

South Phoenix began coming into its own in 1911, the year in which the Roosevelt Dam was completed and flooding along the Salt River stabilized. The irrigation from the dam provided the impetus for establishing Pima cotton farms. This endeavor brought more Mexican laborers into the cotton fields and the alfalfa fields nearby. In the early 1920s, Mexicans also herded cattle and maintained the feed lots for the 6,500-acre Bartlett-Heard Land and Cattle Company. Mexican women like Mauricia Vega performed house-keeping, cooking, and laundry duties for Dwight Heard's family and the families of other Anglo homesteaders.⁸³ Other south Phoenix Mexican families picked oranges and dates from trees that grew in abundance on Heard's ranches. Heard shipped the fruit by rail to East Coast markets.⁸⁴ Ostrich farming was also a south Phoenix industry between 1900 and 1916, and Mexicans helped care for the birds on ranch sites near 36th Street and Broadway, 16th Street and Southern, and 19th Avenue and Broadway.⁸⁵ Two classes of people dominated south Phoenix in the mid-1920s: the homesteaders, both Mexicans and Anglos; and the laborers, virtually all of them Mexican. In the late 1920s and the 1930s, African Americans began to settle in the area, and a few Japanese American families began farming as well.

Through his investment company, Heard initially sold over 1,800 acres of land, with 20 acres being the size of an average tract.⁸⁶ Heard's company also developed the residential subdivision known as Roosevelt Place. The subdivision, however, came with "racial restrictions" that prevented Hispanics from land ownership. But they were welcomed as hired laborers for work on Heard's land and on Anglo-owned properties. Newspaper advertisements touted Roosevelt Place as being "right in the citrus belt . . . with cheap electricity for cooking, lighting and power, and plenty of irrigation water." In 1924, Heard platted the subdivision called Roosevelt Park, located east of the area's community center known as the Neighborhood House, named by Maie Bartlett Heard, Dwight's wife. The enterprising Heard opened Roosevelt Place East in the spring of 1927 and sold one-acre lots for \$575 and two-acre lots for \$1,150 to \$1,500 between Central Avenue and 7th Street, on Greenway and Carter Roads. Both of these subdivisions included race restrictions which did not allow Mexicans to buy lots there. The general area south of the Salt River where Anglos and Mexicans made their homes was known as "the south side" and over time, the area became "South Phoenix." By 1925 both the Anglos and the Hispanics inhabited the area as a "tightly knit cluster" of approximately 300 families around Central and Southern Avenues. By the 1930s Mexicans lived in small settlements south of the Western and Highline Canals; north of Southern

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 35.

⁸² Montiel, 24-25.

⁸³ Katie Valenzuela Macias telephone interview.

⁸⁴ *Phoenix Gazette*, September 30, 1985.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ "There's Pleasure and Profit." *Arizona: the New State Magazine*. 1911.

Avenue between Central Avenue and 16th Street; in the area known as “San Francisco,” a barrio south of the Highline Canal, between 28th and 32nd Streets; and in scattered housing on various farms and ranches.⁸⁷

A few Mexican Americans also owned farms in the south Phoenix area. One farm owner was Teodoro M. Navarro, who tended citrus groves, and in the late 1930s purchased his own land near 28th Street and Baseline Road. His citrus ranch, Navarro Citrus, spanned from 24th to 32nd Streets. When Navarro passed away, the family sold the farm to Albert Singh, whose family owned a produce store at Baseline Road and 40th Street. Mrs. Navarro eventually married Mr. Singh. The Maldonado family also farmed west of Baseline and Central Avenue, where they raised citrus.⁸⁸

Agriculture

By the turn of the century, agriculture in the Phoenix area was firmly established. Alfalfa production was at the center of the farming economy of the entire Salt River Valley, followed by grain production (such as corn, barley, and sorghum), the dairy industry, and fruit and vegetable production.⁸⁹ Mexican farmers and agricultural laborers in particular were vital to the success of agriculture in Phoenix. Mexican farmhands made up a large proportion of the year-round resident labor that supported local farming operations.⁹⁰ The pattern for migratory farm labor that became vital to the success of agriculture in the 1920s and 1930s had not yet been established, or at least not on a large scale.⁹¹ The need for extra labor at certain times of year was a fact of life for farming that went back to the origins of agriculture itself. However, in the years before the large-scale commercial production of cotton, citrus, and a variety of other cash crops, labor requirements of farms remained fairly even for most of the year. In part, this was due to the fact that central Arizona’s growing season was practically year round due to the favorable climate. Alfalfa harvesting occurred up to half a dozen times per year and was initially a very labor intensive activity – later on, more extensive use of horse-drawn mowers and hay rakes decreased the overall manpower requirements to cut hay. Summer threshing season was another time of year when labor requirements increased – year-round farmhands and hired laborers made up the crews that harvested and threshed grain crops. The fact was that farming in the Salt River Valley was still largely based on subsistence and the generally limited regional marketing of crops favored a large population of year-round farm laborers.⁹²

⁸⁷ *Arizona Republican*, “Drive Out Today to See the Citrus Homesites in Roosevelt Place” March, 1911. Ryden, 24, 55-56. *Phoenix Gazette*, September 30, 1985.

⁸⁸ Consuelo Marquez, Encarnacion Hernandez, Ralph Peralta, Katie Macis HHPS Surveys; Erlinda Valera Schweller HHPS Survey.

⁸⁹ Jared Smith, *Making Water Flow Uphill: The History of Agriculture in Mesa, Arizona* (Mesa, Arizona: Mesa Historical Society, 2004), 62-64, 171-173.

⁹⁰ E. D. Tetreau, “Arizona’s Farm Laborers,” *University of Arizona, Agriculture Experiment Station Bulletin No. 163* (May, 1939): 301-302.

⁹¹ Herbert B. Peterson, “Twentieth-Century Search for Cibola: Post World War I Mexican Labor Exploitation in Arizona,” in *The Mexican Americans: An Awakened Minority, 2nd Edition*, edited by Manuel Servín (Beverly Hills, California: Glencoe Press, 1974), 115.

⁹² Smith, *Making Water Flow Uphill*, 63, 76-78.

The appearance of cantaloupes around 1900 and the cultivation of that crop on a large scale marked the real beginnings of cash crop production in the region.⁹³ It would not be until the completion of Roosevelt Dam in 1911 that the production of cash crops would really take off. Such ventures required a secure water supply – a condition that was lacking in the cycle of droughts and floods that led up to the Salt River Project and its dams at the Granite Reef location (completed in 1908) and at Roosevelt Lake. With a secure water supply now practically guaranteed, crops like cotton, citrus, and lettuce began large scale production in earnest. It was crops such as these that led to a tremendously increased demand for migrant labor by the 1920s.⁹⁴

The story of agriculture from the 1910s to the 1930s is linked closely to labor and migration of Mexican Americans. The great cotton boom of the late 1910s led to the first large scale exodus of Mexican laborers to the Salt River Valley. From approximately 400 acres planted in a variety known as Yuma Long Staple in 1912, cotton production rose in fits and bounds up to 33,000 acres by 1917.⁹⁵ Recognizing the unique seasonal labor requirements of this crop, Phoenix and other Salt River Valley farmers turned to the Arizona Cotton Growers Association to raise the labor needed for the cotton harvest season, which spanned from October through February.⁹⁶ In 1918, growers planted 72,000 acres across the Valley and began to panic at the prospect of a labor shortage. With large numbers of young men – included many skilled farm laborers – recruited for the American effort to help fight World War I, there was a shortage of manpower going into what would be the largest harvesting seasons (1918-1921) ever seen in the Southwest. Labor recruiters with the Arizona Cotton Growers Association (referred to hereafter as the ACGA) quickly turned to Mexico in the hopes of meeting the labor needs of Arizona cotton growers, particularly those in the Salt River Valley.⁹⁷

What blocked their efforts were the Alien Contract Labor Act of 1885 and Section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1917 which effectively threw legal barriers against the importation of contract labor from outside the United States. As a result of the lobbying efforts of American agricultural and railroad interests, including local farmers and ranchers like Dwight Heard, the 9th Proviso was attached to Section 3 of the 1917 Immigration Act which made an exception for hiring foreign contract laborers in the event of a labor shortage.⁹⁸ Beginning with the 1918-1919 cotton season, special trains brought thousands of migrant cotton pickers and their families north from Mexican border communities. By the end of the 1920-1921 season growers had hired 35,000 Mexican pickers to harvest cotton since 1918 — the majority of these workers found employment in the Salt River Valley.⁹⁹ This is more than the total population of the City of Phoenix in 1920. In order to achieve such efficiency in recruitment, the cotton growers spent some \$325,000 in recruiting

⁹³ Cash crops are essentially those crops that are primarily produced for sale to a regional, national, or international market, and less to supply local demands (which would probably not be able to consume the high volume of that particular crop).

⁹⁴ Smith, *Making Water Flow Uphill*, 162-163.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 179, 190.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 183-184.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 193; Peterson, “Twentieth-Century Search for Cibola,” 115.

⁹⁸ Herbert B. Peterson, “Twentieth-Century Search for Cibola: Post World War I Mexican Labor Exploitation in Arizona,” in *The Mexican Americans: An Awakened Minority, 2nd Edition*, edited by Manuel Servín (Beverly Hills, California: Glencoe Press, 1974), 115.

⁹⁹ Malcolm Brown and Orin Cassmore, *Migratory Cotton Pickers in Arizona: for the Works Progress Administration, Division of Research* (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 64.

Mexicans and estimated a savings of \$28 million to farmers. A record 180,000 acres were planted in the Valley in 1920 — such an extensive crop would require a record number of workers to harvest it.¹⁰⁰

Despite the promise of another good year, the 1920-1921 cotton season proved disastrous for the growers and farming economy of the Salt River Valley. Well before the harvest was complete, the price of long staple cotton dropped from as high as \$1.25 per pound to as low as 17 cents per pound.¹⁰¹ The end of World War I and changing manufacturing techniques for tires, a key product in which cotton was used, caused the bottom to drop out of the long staple cotton market.¹⁰² Many growers simply walked away from their fields, leaving the unharvested crop to rot on the stems. The repercussions of the cotton crash reverberated across the Salt River Valley, hitting workers as hard as it hit growers. Many farmers simply cut their cotton workers loose, despite the fact that these Mexican migrant workers were hired under contract. The Mexican Consulate in Phoenix estimated that as many as 15,000 to 20,000 migrant workers were stranded in the Valley with no pay and no way to get home.¹⁰³

Appeals to the ACGA went unheeded – the Association did not want to be responsible for returning these workers to Mexico, despite their obligation to do so. Officials of the Mexican Consulate in Phoenix found migrant workers and their families living in terrible conditions. Large numbers of Mexican laborers and their families were literally starving and suffering from exposure in fields around the Valley, and if they were lucky they might at least have a tent.¹⁰⁴ Finally, after several meetings between Mexican officials and the ACGA, they hammered out an agreement. The ACGA would send workers and their families back to Mexico on trains free of charge and make certain that all unpaid wages were reimbursed in full. Before long however, it was clear that the ACGA still intended to do nothing to make good on their promises. Mexico’s President, Alvaro Obregón finally ordered officials of his own government to release the funds needed from the national treasury to bring these stranded workers home.¹⁰⁵

The national post-World War I depression of 1921 exposed a cyclical condition for the economy of the United States, and the Southwest in particular. Because of the economic straits of the country, a cry went up concerning fears toward immigrant workers, Mexicans were blamed for crime waves, the demand for deportation and repatriation rose, and concern over illegal immigrants mushroomed. Local politicians and patriotic groups called for racial and economic restrictions. But as soon as the 1921 depression passed and the economic boom of the 1920s was underway, the demand for Mexican labor started once more. A 1922 U.S. Secretary of Labor report stated, “Labor agencies were doing a flourishing business placing Mexican immigrants in jobs. In the Southwest, they estimated, Mexican workers comprised 85 percent of the railroad track workers, 50 percent of the cotton pickers, and 75 percent of the beet, fruit and vegetable laborers.... Fleets

¹⁰⁰ Smith, 219; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 37; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States 1900-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 38-39.

¹⁰¹ *Arizona Republic*, “Tale of Success: Founder of 9-store Switzer’s Chain Tells How Specialty Shops Got Started” by Walter Switzer, Sr., October 18, 1970.

¹⁰² Smith, 223.

¹⁰³ Peterson, 123.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 125-126.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 128-130.

of trucks originating in El Paso carried workers to towns in Arizona, New Mexico and California.”¹⁰⁶

The response to the Great Depression in the late 1920s and 1930s brought the emigration of Mexican nationals to the Phoenix area, whether legal or illegal, practically to a trickle. Throughout the 1920s, ever increasing restrictions encouraged Phoenix farmers to look toward American migrant workers to fulfill their needs for the annual cotton harvest (despite the cotton crash, the cotton industry rebounded in the Valley and remained the most important money making crops for area farmers). In 1930, official prohibitions more-or-less outlawed the entry of Mexican nationals into the United States for any sort of work.¹⁰⁷ In the Depression era climate where work was desperately sought and often hard to come by for American workers, foreign immigrant workers were no longer welcome. The Farm Labor Service, successor to the Arizona Cotton Growers Association in terms of labor recruitment, ran annual campaigns throughout the 1930s to find enough labor to fulfill the seasonal needs of Arizona cotton growers in particular. While the majority of the year round resident farm laborers in Phoenix were Mexican, most of the migrant workers of the 1930s were whites from such southern states as Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas.¹⁰⁸

By the late 1930s, this trend shifted. In a survey of Arizona farm workers, E. D. Tetreau noted that by 1938 Mexican workers formed the majority of the year round labor force that supported the agricultural economy in Arizona overall and Phoenix in particular. Of the 1,300 year round agricultural laborers included in Tetreau’s statewide study, over half were Mexicans or of Mexican ancestry.¹⁰⁹

Mexican migrant workers often resided in growers’ camps, cheap auto courts on the outskirts of Phoenix, or laborers’ shanty towns located along roads, canals, or the open desert. In the 1920s in present-day Sunnyslope, a Mexican labor camp existed near 7th Avenue and Frier Road. A second camp existed near 3rd Avenue, between Northern Avenue and Frier Road. The families in this camp worked the nearby cotton fields. They lived in large tents, near the irrigation ditches. The tents had hand-swept, hardened dirt floors. The nearby 20-acre Kaler ranch grew alfalfa and cotton, and provided modest services and some employment to the farm workers. They obtained water from the ranch, and the women paid fifty to seventy five cents for dresses sewn by Mrs. L. Dora Kaler. They also purchased milk from the Kaler family for ten cents a quart. Neighbors of the Kalers hired a Mexican girl from the camp to work as a domestic. Some migrant workers living in camps such as these moved on to other states with the next crop, while others found their way into the growing barrios in Phoenix and settled permanently.¹¹⁰

Long-time residents speak of other agricultural-related settlements that no longer exist including the *Barrio de los Chivos* near 40th and Washington Streets, named for a man in the area who raised goats; a small community of families living near 32nd Street south of Washington Street; and *Canal Seco*, a settlement between Osborn and McDowell Road along 48th Street, next to the St. Francis Cemetery. The rural community of *Canal Seco* existed in the 1920s to the 1940s and was named

¹⁰⁶ Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow*, 57, 174.

¹⁰⁷ Brown and Cassmore, “Migratory Cotton Pickers in Arizona,” 65-66.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 67-69.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 301.

¹¹⁰ Mirian Stephenson Kaler, Interview by Jean Reynolds, June 21, 2003, tape recording.

after an old canal on its eastern boundary, near which many farm workers lived. Jose Burruel, who was born there in 1925, remembers that families “squatted” on the land, living in tents and makeshift shacks, and worked on nearby farms. A large date farm was located nearby.¹¹¹ On the other hand, some workers’ camps developed into long term neighborhoods. Examples include *Santa Rosa*, located near 19th Avenue and Ocotillo Road. This was a small camp where Mexican migrant workers settled in the 1940s or early 1950s, with primitive conditions and outhouses. Many of the workers in this community worked for Phoenix’s Foremost Dairy. These settlements represent the trend of Mexican families to settle near sources of work, such as Tovrea Meat Packing Company on the east side of Phoenix and the Foremost Dairy near 19th Avenue.¹¹²

Local farm owners also hired recruiters to bring in Mexican families to live and work for long periods of time on their farms. Unlike migrant workers who traveled continuously, these families settled in their little homes and raised their children there. For example, the Benitez family came from Mexico to the Tolleson area in 1918, and was recruited to live on the Arena and Norton Ranch, in the area of 59th Avenue and Indian School Road. They settled onto the ranch with four other farm worker families in small houses near the Grand Canal. The homes had no cooling or heating, no glass in the windows, no door knobs, and no running water or electricity. The family cooked on a wood-burning stove, used an outhouse, and showered in a canvas tent. Mona Benitez Piña, born in 1932, remembered that they obtained water from the ranch owner’s well, and most of their food came from the fields on the ranch. She lived an isolated existence, and did not travel into Phoenix until she was a teenager. She remembered that in 1948 her family moved into Phoenix, and most of the other families moved to the Santa í barrio around 67th Avenue and Lower Buckeye Road.¹¹³

A few Mexican families owned farms in areas that are now on the western edge of Phoenix. For example, Francisco Valenzuela came to Arizona at the age of 16 in 1877. Eight years later, he registered 160 acres through the Homestead Act between 67th and 75th Avenues, and Buckeye Road to Lower Buckeye Road. He became a citizen in 1887. He married Emilia Montenegro at St. Mary’s Church in 1894. They had nine children. The children attended Fowler Elementary School, but later went to St. Mary’s High School. After Francisco and Emilia passed away, each child received a portion of the land. In the 1910 and 1920s, the Valenzuela farm lands raised alfalfa and maize, dairy cows, horses, chickens and turkeys. Eventually much of the farm land was leased or sold. The family farm was passed down for several generations, at least into the 1980s.¹¹⁴

Commerce

During the 1910s and the 1920s, the growth of cotton, citrus, grains, produce, and dairy and beef industries around the Salt River Valley increased the amount of industrial activity around the railroads and provided a source of employment for the working-class of Phoenix, especially for those who lived nearby in the barrios. Residents worked in the warehouses, packinghouses, and processing plants established near the railroads. Long-time residents recall that many Mexican men worked at a flour mill located at 9th and Madison Streets, as well as a cotton processing plant in the

¹¹¹ José Burruel HHPS Survey.

¹¹² José Burruel, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, 1 June 2006; Jean Marsteller, Rudy Domenzain HHPS Survey.

¹¹³ Mona Benitez Piña, Interview by Jean Reynolds, October 6, 1994, tape recording.

¹¹⁴ Gary Weiland, “The Valenzuelas of Phoenix,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, n. d.

area. They also worked in industries scattered in the neighborhoods south of the railroad, such as the Phoenix Linen and Towel Supply on 3rd and Grant Streets, which began in 1930. Several other industries included the Phoenix Soap Company, the Munger Brothers Olive Oil and Pickling Works, and a vinegar plant on 7th Avenue and Sherman Street. In addition, several hay warehouses were in the area. One resident, Amada Muller, remembers that some of her neighbors also worked in the construction business, making bricks, doing masonry, or pouring concrete.¹¹⁵

The tourist industry in Phoenix remained steady in spite of the Depression, which brought business into the hotels and restaurants. This in turn provided opportunities for laundries, since a majority of the linen and clothing came from hotels and restaurants. Mexican American men and women found work in these service industries. Throughout the 1930s, the city directories list the Phoenix Laundry, the Maricopa Laundry, the Arizona Laundry, and the Bell Laundry as the largest employers of Mexican American women. Union Cleaners, owned by the Velasquez family, employed women as well. Many other women took on domestic work.¹¹⁶

As in earlier years, Mexican Americans owned their own businesses, many of which catered to the Mexican community. These businesses developed on two levels: downtown and in the barrios. Some entrepreneurs opened their establishments in the Phoenix downtown area, especially in the Mexican business district located mainly on Washington Street from 2nd to 7th Streets, although it also extended south to east Jefferson Street. These businesses catered to Mexican clientele but many also attracted non-Mexican clients. These enterprises came and went, but there are many examples to highlight. For instance, the Franco-American Bakery opened in 1930 by Saturino and Urbana Moler from Spain. They had come to the United States in 1902, and finally migrated to Phoenix by 1919. The bakery mainly sold bread loaves, other types of bread, and Mexican pastries. Governor George Hunt was a regular customer at the bakery. The bakery was located near 4th and Washington Streets. The family later moved the bakery to a different location. Two of the grandchildren went on to become priests, Father Isidor Yoldi, who became the pastor for the Santa Rita Chapel of the Sacred Heart Parish, and Father Alfonso, who still serves at St. Mary's Church.¹¹⁷

Pete Romo owned a butcher shop on Washington Street, near the Ramona Theater in the 1920s. Romo was born in Phoenix to parents Rafael and Guadalupe Romo. Rafael was a Sonoran cowboy who worked as a freighter during the construction of the Roosevelt Dam. Pete Romo married the adopted daughter of Ignacio Espinosa, an early Phoenix merchant. One of Pete Romo's sons, Al, was a teacher at North and West High Schools, where he taught Latin and Spanish for 35 years. Another significant business was the Union Cleaners, located at 1017 E. Jefferson Street. Natalio Velasquez, a native of Chihuahua, Mexico, came to Phoenix from Texas in 1921, and worked as a laborer. Soon a friend loaned him money to purchase materials and tools to begin a hat shop. He established the shop in 1926, which eventually developed into a dry cleaning operation. His shop served Mexican and non-Mexican customers, and was managed by a woman, María Rivera. He was active in many local organizations, including the Woodmen of the World, the Alianza, Mutualista

¹¹⁵ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 2; Encarnación Hernandez, Interview by Santos Vega, March 14, 2006, Phoenix AZ, Tape recording; Arsenia Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, April 17, 2006, Phoenix, AZ, CD Recording.

¹¹⁶ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 73-74.

¹¹⁷ Frank Barrios, "Martin Gold: Phoenix Entrepreneur" *Journal of Arizona History*, Winter 1986, Vol. 27 no. 4, 421.

Porfirio Díaz, and later, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce. The business lasted into the 1950s.¹¹⁸



Union Cleaners, c. 1945. Photo from *Las Voces* newspaper.

Other small businesses included barbershops, such as the Sanchez barbershop between 2nd and 3rd Street on Washington Street, owned by Bernie and Pete Sanchez. The Garcia family operated the Flamingo Furniture Store at Adams and 3rd Streets, although they manufactured the furniture at a separate business at Van Buren and 8th Streets. Another kind of business was pharmacies. The first Mexican-operated drug store in Phoenix was the Botica Mexicana, later renamed Ralph's Drug Store. A veteran of the Mexican Revolution, owner Rafael Granados Sr. came to Phoenix in 1923 and established his pharmacy. Beginning in the 1930s, Vincente Canalez operated the Ramona Drug Store, a popular establishment where Hispanics went to get advice from the pharmacist or buy medicine. Canalez co-owned the Ramona Drug Store with future Arizona governor Bob Jones, until Jones sold his portion of the business to Canalez prior to running for Governor. The Ramona store was located on Washington Street between 3rd and 4th Streets, and existed into the 1950s. Long-time residents came to the Ramona Drug Store for herbal remedies to common ailments, such as *casacara sagrada* and *chichupate* tea for stomach aches, *ruda* for ear aches, and *salco* to calm a baby's colic. Canalez, born in Christmas, Arizona, had received his degree from Capitol College in Colorado. Canalez later became involved in the Democratic Party as a precinct committeeman. In 1945 he was selected to serve as the Maricopa County chairman for a



Vincente Canalez.
Photo from *El Sol* newspaper.

¹¹⁸ "Times Past" newspaper, n.d., exhibit text files for Phoenix Museum of History exhibit; *Las Voces*, (Phoenix, AZ) 1949, Vol 5, Nos. 40-43.

committee to fight infantile paralysis, and served on the City of Phoenix's planning commission in the 1950s. He moved to Buckeye in 1957, and served as mayor of Buckeye in 1960.¹¹⁹



La Estrella Tortilla Shop, c. 1965.
Courtesy of Parra Family.

Jose and Elvira Duran owned Duran's Rooms and Duran's Quick Lunch from the 1930s until the 1960s. The two level building located on 707 E. Jefferson Street, had rooms above and a café on the ground level, as well as the family's living quarters. Jose Durán came to Arizona in 1913, worked on the railroad, and then moved to Phoenix where he met Elvira, who was born in 1899 in Sonora. Elvira worked at a restaurant owned by her mother, Petra Quihuis. One family member recalls Duran's Quick Lunch: "The patrons of the café were blue collar workers, farm laborers and low income, and professional Black entertainers. The café

was known for its chili, hot dogs, hamburgers, pancakes and low prices. During this period there was a high degree of segregation in Arizona and Blacks were not allowed in many establishments; thus most of the Black entertainers who came to perform in the city would wind up at the café after performances. Patrons of the hotel were migrant workers who came during certain seasons to work the crops."¹²⁰

Other families started small businesses in neighborhoods, including grocery stores, restaurants, and other service-oriented enterprises. Many of these businesses came and went, but some stayed for longer periods of time and can be singled out as representative of the type of commercial developments in the barrios. West of the Grant Park area, Hidalgo Duarte owned a tortilla stand on Yavapai Street and 3rd Avenue, called La Estrella Tortilla Shop, which cooked and sold tortillas as well as grinding residents' corn for masa. Freddy Garcia owned a barbershop next to La Estrella Shop. Ramon Chavez operated a shoe store on Central Avenue. Luis Lugo owned a grocery store, Lugo's Market, at 3rd Avenue and Tonto Street, and a bakery, called La Pantallera, at 415 W. Sherman Street. Luis came to Arizona in 1913 with his parents who initially started a store in Glendale. The bakery building in Phoenix was constructed in 1917. This bakery's brick ovens were built by Julian Gastelum, the father of auto repair shop owner Fabian Gastelum. It later was owned by Italian bakers, eventually becoming Blunda's Bakery, operated by Ignazio Blunda. Luis Lugo died in 1977 at the age of 79.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Charlie Garcia HHPS Survey; Irma Cordova HHPS Survey; Fernando Diaz Interview; *El Sol*, 6 January 1945; undated newspaper clipping regarding Vincente Canalez and his family, source unknown; *Las Voces*, 1949, vol. 5, nos. 44-47.

¹²⁰ Josefina Duran, *Memories of 707 E. Washington* Chicano Research Collection, University Libraries, Arizona State University (n.d.).

¹²¹ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 11; Luis Lugo Bakery Phoenix Commercial Study State Historic Property Inventory Form, 1984; Louis Bustillo HHPS Survey.

Neighborhood restaurants developed as well. La Casita Restaurant was started by the Corrales family in 1940, at 1021 S. Central Avenue, and it served Sonoran-style food. It closed in 1984. The family opened a second restaurant at 11th and Van Buren Streets in 1942. El Rey Restaurant, located at 922 S. Central, was owned by Gabriel and Consuelo Peralta. The Peralta family had been in Phoenix since 1930, having owned businesses in California and Texas prior. They opened the restaurant in 1937 and closed the business in 1979. They also owned a grocery store at 9th and Washington Streets, which they later sold to the Louis and Mary Grijalva family in 1947.¹²²



El Rey Café, c. 1945.
Photo from *Las Voces* newspaper.

South of the railroad tracks, other grocery stores emerged east and west of Central Avenue. A few of these stores were owned by Anglos or Hispanics, but the majority were Chinese-owned. These grocery stores were part of the life-blood of the community, and they proliferated in the barrios during the first three decades of the twentieth century. For example, in 1906 there were four corner markets located in the Grant Park area; but by 1931, 26 grocery stores existed in the neighborhood.¹²³ East of Central Avenue, El Fresnal Grocery Store, located at 310 E. Buchanan, was established in 1900. Trinidad Arvizu operated this store from 1900 to 1920. The store also housed the Mexican Masonic Temple at the rear. Another neighborhood business was the Sonorensé Café, at 3rd and Buchanan Streets, owned by Gerardo Walker, a Sonora native who came to Phoenix in the 1920s. Food City, located at Mohave and 16th Streets, existed as the first supermarket for Golden Gate, *Cuatro Milpas* and nearby barrios south of the railroad tracks since the 1930s. The store began under the ownership of George Kirk, in 1935. In 1940, Kirk sold the grocery store to Noah Billings, who worked in the store as a butcher. Billings named the store Food City, after a grocery store in California. In 1948, Billings demolished the original store and built a new store, and later added two additions. By the 1960s, the supermarket became a central location where residents of Mexican descent could find a variety of Mexican foods and ingredients. In 1994, Billings sold the Food City store to the Bashas Company. Bashas then purchased other supermarkets (such as Mega Foods, IGA and ABCO) or older Bashas stores in predominantly Hispanic areas around the Valley during the 1990s and established its Food City chain of markets. Another grocery, the Neighborhood Store, located at 12th and Mohave Streets, eventually transformed into the popular Carolina's Mexican Food restaurant, when Carolina Valenzuela purchased the building in 1968.¹²⁴

On the west side, Joaquín Ferrá operated a store at 4th Avenue and Hadley Street in the mid 1920s, which operated until 1952. Ferrá, born in Mexico in 1873, came to Phoenix and opened his first

¹²²Adam Diaz, Interview by Jean Reynolds, February 21, 1999, tape recording; *Las Voces*, November 11, 1948, 22; Louis Grijalva HHPS Survey; Phoenix city directories.

¹²³Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 8.

¹²⁴El Fresnal Grocery Phoenix Commercial Study State Historic Property Inventory Form, 1984; *Recuerdos: Memories of Life in Barrios Unidos of Phoenix*, Arizona. (Phoenix: Braun Sacred Heart Center Inc., 2003), 27, 30; Mary Camarena, Interview by Santos Vega, April 24, 2006, Phoenix, AZ, Tape recording; Rob Johnson, Bashas Public Relations. Personal Correspondence, September 12, 2006; "Packing It In," *Arizona Republic*, January 20, 1994.

grocery store in 1899 at 4th and Monroe Streets. He became active in the community, joining the Mexican Catholic Society formed in 1915 to protest discrimination at St. Mary's Church and to build a new church, and later started a local neighborhood improvement group in the Grant Park area. He also served as Civil Defense Captain for the southwest district of Phoenix during World War II. His granddaughter remembers that at the Hadley Street store he sold many of his groceries to American Indians from the reservation. Other grocery store owners included Mary Lou Lugo Sandoval's "Mary Lou's Market" on Fifth Avenue and Sherman Street, operated by the daughter of bakery owner Luis Lugo. Isabel Flores owned the Flores Grocery in the 1930s, on south Fifth Avenue. The Carlos Higuera Grocery at 923 S. 2nd Avenue was built in 1916. In the 1930s, Chinese grocers, Sin Quong and Tong Ong ran their businesses from this building. Chinese American families owned many grocery stores in the barrios beginning in the late 1920s and into the 1940s, and many of them took over former Anglo or Mexican American owned stores. The growth of neighborhood "corner markets" slowed in the 1940s and began to fade in the 1950s as larger chain supermarkets appeared in Phoenix.¹²⁵

Other individuals gained a professional status in the community. For example, John Lewis, who lived on 1st Avenue, worked as a paralegal, prepared income taxes, and sold real estate in the area. As one of the early realtors working in the area, he sold lots in *Cuatro Milpas*, and the Lewis Park located south of Buckeye Road on 13th Place is named for him. A 1929 land ownership map reveals a subdivision called Lewis Park, encompassing Buckeye to Pima Roads, 13th to 14th Streets. John married a Mexican woman, Enriqueta, and they had several children. One of those children, Anita, became a lawyer in Phoenix in 1947.¹²⁶

By the early 1900s, new newspapers appeared. Jesus Meléndrez came from Yuma, Arizona in 1878 as a typesetter for the *Salt River Valley Herald*, and later, the *Arizona Gazette*. He founded his own newspaper, *El Mensajero*, in 1900. *El Mensajero* reported on local, national and international news. Slogans on the newspapers masthead included "Del pueblo y para el pueblo de habla español" (from the people and for the Spanish speaking people) and "The best medium to reach the Spanish speaking home." Residents could subscribe to this newspaper for \$1.50 per year. Meléndrez helped found the civil rights organization *La Liga Protectora Latina*. He passed away after suffering a stroke, a short time after he sold his newspaper to a new owner, in 1939. He lived at 320 E. Lincoln Street in the Linville (Central Park) neighborhood.¹²⁷



El Mensajero newspaper, 1937.
Courtesy of Frank Barrios.

¹²⁵ Louis Bustillo HGPS Survey; Isabel Flores and Carlos Higuera; Phoenix Commercial Study State Historic Property Inventory Forms, 1984; Leo and Esperanza Ferrá, Telephone interview by Julian Reveles, 14 April 2006; "Capitán Don Joaquín Ferrá," *El Sol*, 14 April 1942.

¹²⁶ Adam Diaz Interview, February 21, 1999; *Las Voces*, November 11, 1948; Land Ownership Map of Phoenix area, 1929, T2NR3E, Map Collection at the Arizona State Library.

¹²⁷ Clipping from *El Mensajero*, 1939; *El Mensajero* October 15, 1927.

Another important newspaper, *El Sol*, emerged in 1938 under the leadership of Jesús Franco, who became a very well-known individual in the Mexican community. Born in Mexico in 1888, Franco graduated from the Mexican Military Academy in 1919 and after joining the Mexican Foreign Service in 1921, he was assigned to San Francisco, California for additional work for the Mexican government. While in San Francisco, he helped Mexican officials organize the Mexican Blue Cross, a charitable organization that enabled Mexican nationals return to Mexico during the Repatriation Movement in the period of the Great Depression. He moved to El Paso in the late 1920s.¹²⁸ Franco and his wife moved to Phoenix in 1934, and soon began promoting the Fiestas Patrias tradition and helped the festival renew itself as a source of pride for the Mexican community.”¹²⁹

In 1938, their daughter recalled, “They founded the newspaper and dedicated it to being a voice for the Mexican people, to help them gain a place in society and to overcome the racial prejudice and social injustice existing at that time.” The Franco family published the newspaper out of a store they opened which sold Mexican goods. They distributed the newspaper every Thursday by “an army of newsboys.” The newspaper stayed in publication under the Franco family until 1980.¹³⁰

Like other residents in Phoenix, the Mexican American community was impacted by the Great Depression. Phoenix as a whole felt the economic effects of the Great Depression, but not to the degree that other cities around the country experienced. Historian Bradford Luckingham notes that, “for 80 percent of the work force with regular jobs in 1931 to 1933, life continued in a subdued 1920's fashion.”¹³¹

Many Mexican Americans did experience hardship — in 1933, 59 percent of Mexicans in Phoenix were without steady employment. Like other Americans during the Depression, Hispanics looked to the government for economic relief through public welfare programs. The Unemployment Relief Bureau provided some jobs to local residents. Beginning in 1932, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and after 1933 the Civil Works Administration operated in Arizona, along with joint federal and state direct relief plans. In November of 1935 the Works Progress Administration began small civil construction projects. Job pay ranged from 50 cents per hour for unskilled labor to \$1.25 for technical and professional work. The National Youth Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) also operated in the state in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The CCC functioned under military discipline and served to further Americanize young Mexicanos, and coincidentally, prepared them for service in World War II. Various work projects began under New Deal programs in Phoenix. Mexican American men found work in the federally-sponsored construction and maintenance projects, although as in other cities, they were required to show proof of citizenship. Women worked as domestic workers or in sewing rooms.¹³²

With the demise of the 1920s prosperity, Mexicans once again became targets of economic and social fears. During the Depression years, the federal government again moved to deport and repatriate “foreigners” throughout the Southwest and Midwest. Some scholars have estimated that

¹²⁸ “Jesús M. Franco dies; Mexican ex-consul here.” *Arizona Republic*. December 17, 1974.

¹²⁹ Luckingham, 45.

¹³⁰ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45; *Arizona Republic*, “El Sol: A proud and pioneer newspaper” n.d.

¹³¹ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 38.

¹³² *Ibid*, 39-46.

more than one million persons of Mexican descent repatriated from 1929 to 1937—the majority of whom were U.S. citizens. In Arizona, deportations and repatriations occurred mostly in mining towns or smaller towns around the state.¹³³ Articles in *El Mensajero* reveal the conflict in the community over this turn of events. For example, a 1936 editorial by Alberto Díaz Vizcarra, Mexican Consul, encouraged residents to repatriate. Three years later the newspaper changed its tune, with an editorial by "Dr. Fenix" criticizing the Cárdenas government's repatriation drive. The newspaper accused the government of asking its citizens to return to "colonize uncolonizable lands" only for political reasons, and further stated: "If the Mexican with all of his great love for his native soil and his old customs remains here, it is because here he finds bread for his children and everything that dignifies a man."¹³⁴

Perhaps in response to the Depression woes of the 1930s, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce was created in 1937. They helped local Hispanic businesses but also addressed issues of employment. In 1940, the Chamber pledged to "interest itself in the economic improvement of the Latin American citizenry by participating in local civic projects. That year, the Chamber met with the Arizona Brewing Company to discuss the lack of Hispanic employees at the brewery. The organization remained small until 1948 when it became a formal organization under the leadership of El Rey Café owner Gabriel Peralta and Abe's Liquor owner Abraham Salcido. Its goals included bettering Mexican American businesses and the community, as well as furthering trade with Mexico, especially with Sonora. In 1947, it produced a Spanish-language magazine, *Las Voces*, which featured many prominent and active businessmen in Phoenix. The Chamber eventually renamed itself the Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.¹³⁵

Political Involvement and Social Organizations

While local businesses provided goods and services to the community, during the first three decades of the twentieth century Mexican American leaders formed organizations concerned with mutual aid, social issues, and political involvement. During the period of the Mexican Revolution, Phoenix Hispanics formed mutual aid societies, *Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juarez*, and *Sociedad Mutualista Porfirio Díaz*, to assist refugees arriving from Mexico and to provide services they could not obtain elsewhere in an Anglo-dominated community. Another *mutualista* was *Los Leñadores del Mundo* (Woodmen of the World). These *mutualistas*, composed of working-class and middle-class members, survived for several decades, providing various services to the needy, such as insurance programs and relief. They maintained and strengthened residents' ties to Mexico, and provided socializing opportunities. They also established chapters in different neighborhoods.¹³⁶ The Alma Azteca Lodge #9 of the *Alianza Hispano Americana* continued to operate as well, opening a two-story lodge and apartment building at Jefferson and 4th Streets in 1922. Later it relocated to 333 E.

¹³³ Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, (5th Edition), 209-212; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 40-42. Voluntary repatriation was supported by the Mexican and U.S. governments, and deportations occurred on the basis of residing in the country illegally, criminal or immoral activities, physical or mental defects, anti-government activities, or for having become a public charge within the first five years of his or her arrival. See Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 122-23, 174-5.

¹³⁴ *El Mensajero*, March 28, 1936; and May 29, 1939.

¹³⁵ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45; Michael J. Kotlanger, *Phoenix, Arizona: 1920-1940* (Ph.D. dissertation. Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 1983), 433; *El Mensajero* June 28, 1940; "20th Anniversary," *Fiesta*, (Phoenix, AZ), December 1967, 20; *Las Voces*, 1949, Vol 5, nos. 40-43.

¹³⁶ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 46; *El Mensajero* 17 May 1940; Luckingham, 28.

Washington Street. By the 1930s, the *Alianza* had more than 17,000 members throughout the west as well as in Mexico.¹³⁷

The Friendly House, started by an Anglo group called the Phoenix Americanization Committee, formed during the same period as the *mutualistas*. The Committee, following the principles of the national Americanization movement, sought to assimilate immigrants into American culture, particularly during World War I. Established in 1922 after the peak of the national movement, the Friendly House began as a two-room "community house" where classes in English, citizenship, hygiene and homemaking were taught to Mexican residents. Unlike earlier settlement houses in the U.S., this organization did not have a commitment to social reform or religious proselytization. It focused on training immigrant women and providing social services and Americanization classes. Although originally established by Anglos, the Friendly House, located at 802 S. 1st Avenue, became a more integral part of the community during the Depression years. This relationship developed due to the settlement house's social service orientation and the leadership of director Plácida García Smith, who began her tenure in 1931.¹³⁸

Under Smith's direction, the Friendly House provided many services and programs for Hispanic residents. She helped operate federal economic assistance programs through the settlement house, initiated domestic training classes, and organized the first Mexican American Boy Scout Troop in Phoenix, the Mexican Orchestra and the Mexican Dance Project. Since eligibility for relief programs required citizenship, English and Americanization classes increased at the Friendly House. As a member of the Southside Improvement Association, she helped increase services in local parks, as well as to help to establish a well-baby and prenatal clinic in cooperation with the U.S. Public Health Department. The Friendly House also provided day care, and assisted those who wished to repatriate to Mexico.¹³⁹



Friendly House, c. 1940.

Courtesy Department of Archives and Special Collections,
Hayden Library, Arizona State University.

Plácida García Smith was a well-known community leader who worked within the Mexican community. While Smith did not live in the Mexican American community, the residents thought highly of her work and dedication. Adam Diaz considered her to be his mentor. He commented,

¹³⁷ Kotlanger, 432; José Burruel HHPS Survey; W. Lane Rogers, "Alianza Hispano-Americana, *Arizona Capitol Times*, (Phoenix, AZ), n.d.

¹³⁸ Mary Ruth Titcomb, *Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest: A History of Phoenix's Friendly House, 1920-1983*, (MA Thesis, UC Santa Barbara, 1984), 7-17, 38-41; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48.

¹³⁹ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 44; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 41.

"as far as the people in the neighborhood, Plácida Smith did wonders. She knew everybody in the neighborhood. She would ride around in her little 1935 Ford and visit all the people, and then if she would find some family that was in dire need, why she would appeal to the board...and most of the time they would come to me and say 'this family needs help'." ¹⁴⁰

One of the most important services provided by the Friendly House was the job placement programs. Mary López Garcia, who lived at 3rd Avenue and Buckeye Road, used this service as a teenager. Mary had to quit school in 1929, at the age of fourteen, in order to help her father earn money for their family. Although the age limit for working was fifteen, she obtained a job through the Friendly House as a maid. During the Depression, the Friendly House placed Mexican girls and women into domestic jobs, where they received between \$4 and \$7 weekly for permanent positions. By the end of the 1930s, the agency noted that it provided 2,500 temporary placements and 320 permanent placements per year. ¹⁴¹

Other Hispanic community organizations focused on particular neighborhoods formed during the trying years of the 1930s. The East Madison Street Settlement began in 1936 when property located in the warehouse district on the Southern Pacific tracks was provided to the Episcopal Church for the purpose of settlement and playground work. A 1944 document described the organization as serving "a 'forgotten' part of Phoenix, the area extending for a number of blocks in each direction. The people in this district are Spanish speaking Americans and Mexicans who live in wretched houses and shacks. Many work in the nearby produce sheds and packing houses." ¹⁴²

Between 1910 and the 1930s, the Mexican American community organized politically in different ways. Even in these early years, they organized to respond to issues of discrimination or social needs. This trend would continue for many decades to come, through the trying years of the Great Depression, with the return of World War II veterans, and with the rise of the 1960s Chicano Movement. One significant early civil rights organization started in the Mexican American community was *La Liga Protectora Latina* (LPL). In 1914, businessmen Pedro G. de la Lama, Ignacio Espinoza, Jesus Meléndrez and others met to form this mutual aid society. A year later, LPL called a community meeting at a skating rink at First and Monroe Streets. The organizers rallied residents against the Claypool-Kinney Bill, which proposed to prohibit employers from hiring "anyone deaf or dumb, or who could not speak or read the English language." Across the state, especially in mining towns, over 600 individuals signed a petition in opposition to the bill, which LPL presented at the state capitol. This bill passed at the state level but was later overturned by the Arizona Supreme Court. ¹⁴³

LPL members elected Pedro G. de la Lama as their president and main spokesperson. Pedro was well educated and a former Mexican Army officer. The *mutualista* soon had lodges throughout the state, each of which focused on assisting their own Mexican American communities. LPL incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1916, with the intent to unite all "persons of the Latin

¹⁴⁰ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 20.

¹⁴¹ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 75.

¹⁴² 1944 Agreement between Phoenix Community Chest and East Madison Street Settlement; Golden Gate Settlement Files, Golden Gate Community Center.

¹⁴³ James McBride, "The Liga Protectora Latina" *Journal of the West*, Vol. 14, no 4, October 1975, 82-83.

race” and to “give educational, moral, social, material aid and protection to its members,” including health care, funeral expenses, and “moral aid to its members in distress.”¹⁴⁴

During World War I, LPL supported the war effort and raised money for the Red Cross. Like political organizations after them, LPL supported political candidates who promised to listen to Mexican American concerns. In 1918, the organization asked the Arizona Legislature to approve bilingual education in elementary schools, and also began holding educational classes for Spanish-speaking citizens. Chapters of LPL spread into California, New Mexico, and even to Pennsylvania. The organization began publishing a newspaper, *La Justicia*. By 1920 the Phoenix chapter of LPL had over 300 members and over 4,000 across the Southwest, but declined during the 1920s due to internal problems.¹⁴⁵ In 1935, former LPL president Pedro G. de la Lama launched the Spanish American People’s Organization, which mainly endorsed political candidates.¹⁴⁶



Liga Protectora Latina, Tucson chapter, c. 1915.

Pedro G. de la Lama is in the first row in the white suit, and second to his left is Ignacio Espinoza.

Courtesy of the Romo Family.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 83. Pedro G. de la Lama died in 1945.

¹⁴⁵ McBride, 84-89; Barrios, “Phoenix: A Divided City,” 6.

¹⁴⁶ *El Mensajero* February 23, 1935.

Like Pedro G. de la Lama, Phoenix Mexican Americans actively established groups that supported particular political candidates, as a way to maintain a voice in the political process from which they were otherwise excluded. There had been no representation at the city level from the Mexican American community in Phoenix since the time of Enrique Gárfias in 1878, when he was City Marshall and Town Constable. In 1913 the structure of Phoenix's city government changed from an old ward system to a city manager-city commission system. Eliminating the ward system lessened the political influence of less affluent citizens in the southern parts of the city. Most of the new at-large officials were Anglos elected from the predominantly Anglo parts of town.¹⁴⁷

One political organization was the Latin American Club, formed in 1932 by Grant Park resident Luis Cordova. Cordova was born in 1898 in Phoenix. He was a boilermaker for the Southern Pacific. He married in 1918, and raised eight children in a home near Grant Street and Central Avenue. He was well-known for his generosity to those in need and for his political affiliations. The founding principles of this statewide club included promoting a better standard of living, ending segregation of Mexican American children in public schools across the state, as well as demanding equal education and better teachers.



Luis Cordova family, 1951.
Courtesy of the Cordova Family.

They also pushed for increased voting power and political participation of Mexican Americans. The Phoenix chapter of the Latin American Club focused mainly on political involvement, organizing voter registration drives among the Spanish-speaking residents and supporting certain Democrat candidates. The Club often held rallies for Anglo political candidates, both in Phoenix and in smaller towns across the state.¹⁴⁸

Another group was the Southside Improvement Association, started in 1935 and headquartered in the Grant Park neighborhood. This was a "social-political club" that became involved in local politics as well as social issues. This organization eventually consisted of 600 members, headed by Joaquin Ferrá, early Phoenix merchant, and notary public John Lewis. Other active organizational leaders included bakery owner Luis Lugo and Manuel Segarra. This organization, which met at the Friendly House, petitioned for improvements in the neighborhoods "south of the tracks." They asked for improved street and alley maintenance, roads to be graveled, the elimination of open irrigation ditches which contributed to insect problems, more street lights, and more police protection at night. They also demanded improvements in local parks.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 28.

¹⁴⁸ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 14; *El Mensajero* February 6, 1938; Leo and Esperanza Ferrá, telephone interview by Julian Reveles, April 14, 2006, Phoenix, AZ.

Religion

By the 1910s and 1920s, the Mexican American community became very active in building their churches, most of the time through local fundraising efforts and residents' labor and donation of materials. The highest percentage of Mexican Americans held to the Catholic faith, although a few Protestant churches began establishing tiny Mexican missions in an effort to convert the primarily Catholic community. Each of the churches that emerged from the community held a deep significance to the residents, who felt a great sense of ownership to their places of worship. Like African Americans, race issues played into their religious experience, but Mexican Americans were part of a larger church structure dominated by a religious hierarchy of mainly non-Hispanic leaders, rather than worshiping in churches run by members of their own ethnic group, as was the African American experience. So while African Americans often found a strong sense of community and control in their churches, Mexican American Catholics often struggled with the religious hierarchy for a place of their own, especially in relation to language and church locations. On the margins, Mexican Protestant Churches quickened the Americanization process of their converts, and members became involved with Anglo congregations (who remained separate) over time through various programs or church practices.

The story of Immaculate Heart Church, the most well-known religious institution in Phoenix's Mexican community, ties into the community's ongoing efforts to provide social services, fight discrimination, and create a political voice. As illustrated in the development of segregated residential areas or in the fight to combat discriminatory labor legislation, Mexican Americans faced prejudice at every turn in Phoenix. The same held true in St. Mary's, the very church that the Mexican American community built from hand-made adobes. In 1902, the original adobe church of St. Mary's was demolished, and replaced in 1903 by a basement structure. The beautiful upper church was completed in 1915. The new St. Mary's was located on Monroe Street between 3rd and 4th Streets. The majority of the laity who attended St. Mary's Church was of Mexican descent and this held true until the construction of the Immaculate Heart Church in 1928. From 1896 until 1917, the number of Anglo families attending only grew from 15 to 181, while Mexican families increased from 100 to over 650 members.¹⁵⁰

Father Novatus Benzing, who pastored St. Mary's Church for most of the years between 1896 and 1928, began a policy of segregation. Although parishioners of Mexican descent dedicated themselves, their time, and finances to the expansion of St. Mary's Church in 1915, when the doors opened to the new building, Father Benzing announced that the Mexican laity were to be relegated to the basement. Here, and only here, were services in Spanish held. All services upstairs were in English. Although a few wealthier families did go to services upstairs, most families attended Mass in the basement. Children of Mexican descent growing up in Phoenix, like Adam Diaz, experienced their first Holy Communion in the basement, separate from Anglo American children.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Jean Reynolds, *Por Los Mexicanos y Para Los Mexicanos: The Creation of la Iglesia de Inmaculado Corazón de María in Phoenix, Arizona*. Unpublished manuscript, 1996, 7-8. Hereafter called "Por Los Mexicanos."

¹⁵¹ Adam Diaz, interview by Jean Reynolds and Alberto L. Pulido, March 26, 1996, tape recording.



St. Mary's Church, 1915. The San Antonio School is on the left of the church, and St. Mary's Grammar School is on the right.
 Courtesy Phoenix Museum of History.

The Mexican laity protested the segregation immediately. The *Arizona Gazette* reported that Mexican Americans argued they had “equal rights with other members of the congregation, their forefathers were the first founders of the mission in Phoenix, they contributed their full share toward the church construction and toward its maintenance and, therefore, the Spanish sermons should alternate with the English in the body of the church proper.” The Mexican congregation also suspected that Father Benzing initiated the segregation as an exchange for financial contributions from the Anglo members who desired to claim the newly-built church as their own and to hold separate services. On the other hand, Father Benzing argued that language was one reason for the segregation. Yet only sermons were presented in English and Spanish; the Mass was performed in Latin.¹⁵²

Angered by such discriminatory practices, a delegation from the Mexican Catholic Society organized in May of 1915, and approached Father Benzing with their grievances and a petition signed by 1,500 members of the Society. Unsatisfied with Father Benzing's noncommittal response, another delegation headed by Dr. Lorenzo Boído, a prominent Phoenix doctor, traveled to Tucson in June in order to present their protest and petition to Bishop Henry Granjon, and to ask for the establishment of a separate parish. Others in the delegation included A.R. Redondo, Joaquín Ferrá, L. Bracamonte, J. Mancillas, and two women, Sara Serrano and Refugia Soto.¹⁵³ Bishop Granjon authorized the "Spanish-speaking people of Phoenix" to erect a new church. The *Arizona Republican* notes that the Mexicano laity had already raised \$5,000 towards the new church by June of 1915. Father Benzing strongly supported the idea of a new church. He said, "If the

¹⁵² *Arizona Gazette*, "Parishioners Would Erect New Parish," June 26 1915, 9; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 30.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* The Mexican Catholic Society was headed by A.R. Redondo as president, Joaquin Ferrá as vice-president, Sara Serrano as secretary, and Martin Gold as treasurer. Redondo worked for the *Arizona Republican*, and Ferrá owned two grocery stores in Phoenix.

Spanish-American part of the congregation is not satisfied with the present arrangement, I will certainly not interpose any objection to their establishing a parish of their own."¹⁵⁴

Bishop Daniel J. Gercke in Tucson, who had succeeded Granjon in 1923, chose the Reverend Antimo G. Nebreda, C.M.F., a Spanish priest of the Claretian Order, to lead the new parish. Nebreda had been the Father Superior for eight years in Jerome, Arizona. He arrived in Phoenix on October 19, 1925 as a Claretian missionary to minister to the Mexican laity and to eventually establish a separate church for that community. The Claretian Order was based in San Gabriel, California. Other missionary priests of the Claretian order arrived to work with Nebreda and to minister to the towns and communities around Phoenix. Father Agustín Cubillo was assigned to the areas of Tolleson, Glendale, Marinette, Peoria, Litchfield, Buckeye, Cashion and Liberty. To the east of Phoenix, Father Angel Conanglo was assigned Tempe, Mesa, Chandler, Guadalupe, "Yakitown," Goodyear, Gilbert, and Scottsdale. Father John Arans was assigned to St. Anthony's Church, a small chapel at 7th Avenue between Yavapai and Maricopa Roads. Father Nebreda, as Father Superior, remained in Phoenix and took charge of services in St. Mary's basement, although he preached in other churches around the Valley, particularly Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tempe.¹⁵⁵

In late 1926, Father Nebreda located a plot of land at 9th and Washington Streets for the church, rectory and parochial school. Mexican parishioners set to work to raise funds. They had been collecting money for a new church since Bishop Granjon had granted their request in 1915, with "a series of fairs, dances, socials, dinners and similar types of fund-raising events." Father Nebreda headed the construction project, encouraging donations no matter how small, and soliciting funds from the diocese. They formed committees which took on various aspects of the new church's construction, such as bells for the tower. The diocese then authorized a loan to pay for the construction of the buildings.¹⁵⁶

On January 10, 1928 in a private ceremony, Father Nebreda consecrated the land on which the school, rectory and church were to be built. Manuel Orta, who was a contractor and architect living in the Phoenix Mexican community, was chosen to design and oversee the construction of the buildings. Many of the workers were from the community itself, and that there were many volunteers as opposed to paid laborers to keep costs down. By the fourth of March, the first stone of the school was blessed in a public ceremony.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ *Arizona Gazette*, "Mother Church to be Divided Soon" June 29, 1915.

¹⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Por Los Mexicanos*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*; 16-19.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 21-24.



Immaculate Heart Church, 1940.
Photo from *Immaculate Heart Church, 50th Anniversary* booklet.

The builders completed the school and rectory at 909 E. Washington Street in September of 1928. Finally in December, *La Inmaculada Corazón de María*, or the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, was finished. Built in the Second Renaissance Revival Style, the church included two towers and a balcony that connected them. It was further decorated inside with stained glass windows along the side walls, many donated by parishioners, and decorative windows and a smaller rose window in front. The main altar was donated by the St. Agustín Cathedral in Tucson. The Stations of the Cross came from Europe. Architect Manuel Orta had acquaintances in Spain, and he made a contract with them to bring the *via crucis* to Phoenix, to be placed in the church. The new church could seat 1,200 people. Bishops from Tucson, Hermosillo, Culiacán, and San Gabriel, California officiated the dedication service on December 13, 1928. It was a testament to the Mexican community's determination to create a social and spiritual space where their culture, traditions and racial identity were validated. The Immaculate Heart Church continues to be a central source of community pride to this day.¹⁵⁸

At this point St. Mary's and Immaculate Heart of Mary Churches became the "mother parishes" under the Franciscans (St. Mary's) and the Claretians (Immaculate Heart) for new Catholic churches that would arise in Phoenix. As population growth occurred in an area of Phoenix, the pastor of either parish would provide services to a new group of parishioners, who eventually organized and formed their own church, and were headed by a priest from that particular order. St. Anthony's Church was the first to form in the growing barrios under the Immaculate Heart parish, and many others would follow in later years.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 19-20.

¹⁵⁹ From article in *Arizona Capitol Times*, April 17, 1998 (Vol 99 #16), 1-2.

St. Anthony's Catholic Church started in 1924 as a small chapel at 1145 S. 7th Avenue. It provided services for those in the Immaculate Heart parish who lived in the Grant Park neighborhood. Long-time resident Amada Muller recalled that "the priest would come from Immaculate Heart every Sunday and Wednesday, on Wednesday they would come and teach the kids catechism, and Sundays they'd come and say Mass . . . St. Anthony's was just a small building, and it was made of concrete, and I remember it had a little steeple that was curved, and the common wooden benches."¹⁶⁰ The church moved to a new location in the 1940s on south 1st Street, which will be described in a later part of the report.

Other Catholic churches grew in areas where Mexican barrios had begun to flourish in the 1920s and 1930s. These include the present-day St. Pius X, located at 801 S. 7th Avenue. This church began as St. Monica's Mission in 1936 through the efforts of Franciscan priest Emmett McLoughlin, prior to his involvement in the public housing movement. After raising money to buy and remodel an old grocery store on Sherman Street and 7th Avenue, Father McLoughlin opened Saint Monica's Mission. Although the church had a stronger connection to the African American community, some Mexican Americans attended as well. For example, in the early 1940s Arnulfo Verdugo was an altar boy at the church. African American and Mexican American children patronized the social hall, and later the Westside Boys Club started here, attracting a racially mixed crowd of boys.¹⁶¹

South of the Salt River, families of Mexican descent usually traveled north into Phoenix to attend church. For example, Concepción Joya, who lived near Baseline Road and 19th Avenue during the 1910s and 1920s, traveled by horse and wagon with her family to St. Mary's Church and later Immaculate Heart Church for services. Simon and Francisco Vasquez built a private chapel, San Francisco Xavier Mission, in 1940. It is unknown if the chapel was open to the community. The Vasquez family came from Sonora via horse-drawn wagon in 1915. They eventually owned a number of restaurant chains, including Poncho's on south Central Avenue, Aunt Chilada's on Baseline Road, and the SomeBurro's chain in the east Valley.¹⁶²

Protestant congregations also formed Spanish-speaking churches that developed during the early 1900s in Phoenix. Anglo-led denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians had been conducting missionary work in Mexican communities in Texas, New Mexico and California since the mid to late 1800s. For example, the first Spanish-speaking Presbyterian church in the Arizona Territory developed in Morenci in 1889 under missionaries from New Mexico. These churches provided an alternative religious tradition for the Mexican community, which had always been connected with the Catholic tradition. The percentage of Mexican residents joining Protestant churches remained small. In 1925, the Phoenix city directory listed only three Mexican Protestant churches. In the 1930s, Mexican Protestant churches were slowly increasing at this time in cities such as Tucson, Houston, and Los Angeles. By 1940, six Protestant churches were active in the area which ministered to Mexican Americans.¹⁶³

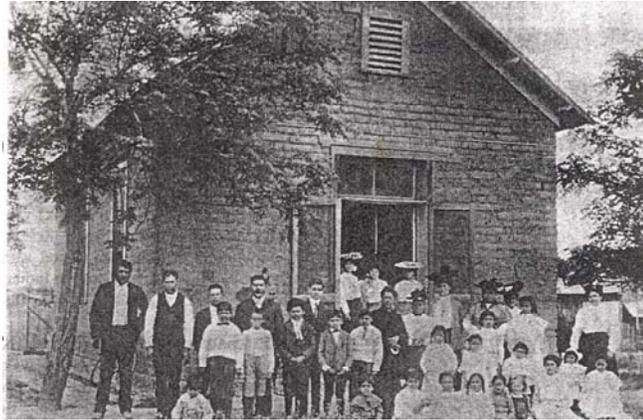
¹⁶⁰ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 16.

¹⁶¹ Dean and Reynolds, 45-46; Arnulfo Verdugo HHPS Survey.

¹⁶² Concepción Joya, Interview by Pete R. Dimas; Ryden, 65.

¹⁶³ Phoenix City Directories, 1925-1960; Douglas Brackenridge, *Iglesia Presbiteriana: A History of Presbyterians and Mexican Americans in the Southwest*, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 74-77.

Some of these churches had long histories in Phoenix. For example, the first Protestant church was *La Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida* (Mexican Methodist Episcopal church), established in 1892 by the Methodist Episcopal church. Charter members included Rafael Grijalva, Jose Ortega, and Manuel Arena. This church held services at 9th Avenue and Harrison Street, then on the edge of Chinatown at 39 E. Madison Street, until the 1940s. The Methodist church in 1947 relocated to the Grant Park neighborhood at 701 S. 1st Street, and offered a free kindergarten class and recreational classes for the community. The church held its dedication ceremony on March 21, 1948.¹⁶⁴



La Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida at 9th Avenue and Harrison Street, c. 1900. Courtesy of Jean Reynolds Collection.

Another church, *La Primera Iglesia Mexicana Baptista* (First Mexican Baptist) began as a mission in 1917 under the Home Mission Society of the North Baptist Convention. The early congregation held services at local Baptist churches until they established their own building in 1920 at 11th and Washington Streets under the name of the “Mexican Christian Center.” Members organized as a formal church (rather than a mission) two years later. They remained there until 1939, then moved to 10th and Jefferson Streets, where the church was located into the 1960s. In 1967, Pastor José Juarez and the congregation purchased a building at 15th Avenue and Monroe Street, and moved the services to this new church. The new church eventually changed its name to the First Hispanic Baptist Church. In the 1930s, the church was involved with the Valley Christian Center, which provided youth programs, women’s activities, citizenship training and assistance, and other social services.¹⁶⁵

A third Protestant church was the Mexican Seventh Day Adventist, founded in 1921 by missionaries who trained at the Spanish-American Training School at 14th Street north of McDowell Road, which existed from 1925 until 1953 at 711 S. Montezuma Street. One early member was Deacon Leandro Vega, who was converted to the *Sabatista* faith by Tom Sullivan, the owner of a ranch at which he worked. Led by Pastor Saul Visser, the church congregation held dinners and other events to raise money for a new building. In 1954, the church members built a new structure at 350 W. Mohave Street. By the 1970s the church had grown too small, so the congregation moved again to 4408 N. 35th Avenue, and dedicated the new building in 1972.¹⁶⁶

In 1909 the First Presbyterian Church of Phoenix began a Sunday school, also known as the “Railroad Mission” at Tonto and 1st Avenues, part of the work of the Creighton Mission aimed at

¹⁶⁴ Primera Iglesia celebrates 100 years of service to the community,” *Desert Views*, (Phoenix, AZ), 13 March 1992.

¹⁶⁵ Telephone interview with Reverend Juan Martinez by Jean Reynolds, 3 May 1997; Lossi Speer, *From These Roots, A History of Arizona Baptists*, 1975, Phoenix: ABC Press, 1975), 62-63.

¹⁶⁶ Phoenix City Directories, 1925-1960; Myrtle Pohle, *The Truth Seekers: Saga of the Southwest*, (California: Pacific Press Publishing, 1983), 52-61.

converting Hispanics. *La Iglesia Mexicana Presbiteriana* (Mexican Presbyterian Church) grew out of this mission in 1924, located at 623 S. 2nd Avenue, and from the 1930s until 1960 it stood on 3rd and Pima Avenues. Under the leadership of Reverend Pasos, the church established a kitchen which provided free lunches to children in the area during the school year and summer vacation months — a project sponsored by the Phoenix section of the Maricopa County Parent-Teacher Association and funded through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The children who ate at the kitchen came from the Lincoln, Grant, Lowell and Monroe schools. Although never a large congregation, the little church thrived in the barrio, and changed its name to Betania Prebysterian Church by 1955.

The women of the Presbyterian Church participated in the Ladies Aid Society, functioned as Sunday School teachers, held bible studies, and visited people. The women raised money to support their church, by such activities as going to the First Presbyterian Church on Monroe Street and selling tamales. Mexican American women from each of the three Protestant denominations met occasionally at conventions or in a joint effort to raise money for the needs of the less fortunate. In 1975, Betania Presbyterian Church moved to its current location, at 2811 N. 39th Avenue.¹⁶⁷

Education

In the early 1900s, in correspondence with the growth of the Hispanic barrios, “racially isolated” schools developed. Unlike African Americans who experienced *de jure* segregation and were mandated by law to attend separate schools, Hispanic children attended schools that were integrated with other racial groups. The schools in some neighborhoods which had a large Hispanic population, such as the Grant Park area, tended to be primarily Hispanic, with some Asian American and Anglo presence.¹⁶⁸ In other neighborhoods like east Phoenix, Hispanic children attended largely Anglo schools. It also appears that within the Phoenix city limits, schools did not necessarily follow the pattern of creating a separate building (or classrooms) for Hispanic children for grades 1-3, with integration in the fourth grade. This was a common practice in the surrounding communities of south Phoenix, Tolleson, Kyrene, Tempe, and Chandler. This type of *de facto* segregation occurred due to the school districts’ argument that Mexican children could learn English better in this manner, although the children often had poorer facilities and unequal educational experiences.

South of the Salt River, the Heard School opened in 1905, a one-room adobe building on the Heard Ranch in south Phoenix, located south of Broadway Road between 24th and 28th Streets. Five Mexican children and two Anglo children were taught their lessons by Miss Victoria Harmon of Tempe.¹⁶⁹ That Mexican and Anglo children attended school together is an indication that Heard made an effort to provide equal education to the children of Anglo families who lived in his “restricted” subdivisions and to the children of the Mexican families who worked on his farm and ranch.¹⁷⁰ A few years later, community members west of Central Avenue sent their children to a second school building, called the Broadway School. This school was located on 15th Avenue, between Broadway Road and Southern Avenue. Eventually the population outgrew these little

¹⁶⁷ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 16; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 99-100

¹⁶⁸ Kotlanger, 435.

¹⁶⁹ Ryden, 57-58.

¹⁷⁰ *The Phoenix Gazette*, September 30, 1985.

buildings. The newly formed School District #66 opened the Roosevelt School in 1913, near 7th Street and Southern Avenue. Students attending this school stayed until their second year of high school, when they transferred to Tempe Union High. The East Ward School built in the 1910s probably replaced the old adobe Heard School, but only lasted until the 1920s. Anglo and Mexican American students were intermixed, while Black students living in the area attended the segregated West Ward School near 27th Avenue and Southern Avenue, and later, the Okemah School, at 40th and Miami Streets.¹⁷¹

One study notes that by the 1930s, “the numbers of Hispanic children in the Roosevelt School equaled and some instances surpassed the numbers of Anglo children enrolled in the school. In the early years of the school, as part of the ‘Americanization’ program to promote English as the spoken language, those who spoke Spanish were segregated from their Anglo counterparts for the first three years of schooling. This practice ended in 1936 and the school classes were integrated.”¹⁷²

North of the river, barrio school children, both Hispanic and Anglo, however, attended their neighborhood public schools and performed well in the classroom. Those from the Golden Gate barrio attended the Wilson, Hawkins and Skiff elementary schools. The Wilson School, established in 1879, and the Hawkins school, built in 1938, shared its student population with the Skiff school. The Skiff school operated until the 1980.¹⁷³ North of the railroad tracks and east of Central Avenue, children attended Longfellow School, Adams School, Washington School, Garfield School, and many moved to Monroe School after the fourth grade.

West of Central Avenue and south of the Southern Pacific line, a number of schools opened as well.

In 1903, the Linville School on Lincoln and First Streets, accepted its new group of students. In 1913, the school grew and became known as Lincoln School. In 1912, Grant School was built near 5th Avenue and Grant Street, which provided classes for grades kindergarten through fourth grades. It later added two more grades. Once students graduated from Grant School, they attended Adams or Lowell School. In 1922, the original Lowell Elementary School was built near 2nd Avenue and Yavapai Street, offering classes for children kindergarten through eighth grades. Grant School closed in 1977. All the residents of the Grant Park neighborhood



Grant School, c. 1945.
History of the Grant Park Neighborhood.

attended these schools, except for African American children. In the mid-1940s, Daniel Grijalva, a well-known and popular teacher at the school, and an important member of the Phoenix chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens League (LULAC), lived on south 1st Avenue in a

¹⁷¹ “History of the Roosevelt School Site,” n.d., Arizona Historical Foundation, University Libraries, Arizona State University.

¹⁷² Ryden, 57-65; *Phoenix Magazine* “Good Old Fashioned School Days” December 1974.

¹⁷³ “Community History” (Wilson School).

1909 neoclassical-styled building known today as the Thomas House, which was moved to Historic Heritage Square in the 1980s to save the home from demolition.¹⁷⁴

Further west, especially in the barrio west of 7th Avenue that came to be known as La Maravilla, children attended Jackson School through the 6th grade, and then moved on to the Grace Court School at 8th Avenue and Adams Street. Florencio “Lencho” Othón lived in La Maravilla and remembers attempting to attend Lowell School in the 1920s. The school officials insisted that he attend Jackson and Grace Court Schools due to the location of his residence, and he found it very difficult and alienating to attend these predominantly Anglo schools on the west side.¹⁷⁵

Public schools located in the *Mexicano* barrios didn’t always include all the modern amenities, such as cafeterias. This became a community issue in Grant Park in the 1930s. Local leader, Adam Diaz and his wife helped other Mexican Americans in the operation of a small lunch counter for the students at Lowell School, which had no cafeteria. They purchased food, at reduced costs, from Midwest Meat Company, Holsum Bread Company, and Arnold’s Pickles and sold hot dogs to the children for ten cents. They and other parents lobbied the school board for a cafeteria at Lowell School and within a period of two years, the district funded the construction of a cafeteria and the children received nutritious foods for lunch.¹⁷⁶



Lowell School, c. 1965.
Courtesy of Parra Family.

Concern for nutrition wasn’t the only educational issue for the children in the neighborhood. Throughout the country, schools with mainly Mexican students adhered to educational programs that emphasized vocational education, a non-academic curriculum and job training. Often labeling them as mentally inferior, public schools provided these students with an education that would place them in occupations which served the existing needs of industry and business. This practice meant that Mexican Americans would be relegated to the labor ranks of the lowest levels.¹⁷⁷ It seemed that teachers at Grant and Lowell Schools preferred vocational training over academic education, which funneled Mexican Americans and *Mexicanos* into lower paying occupations, rather than encouraging them to pursue a high school diploma and perhaps college. During the 1930s and 1940s, Adam Diaz and others recognized this trend and began urging parents to encourage their children to press on after grade school. They organized the Lowell-Grant School Neighborhood Council. This organization brought parents together to encourage them to send their children to high school and beyond, if possible. They began to raise academic scholarships of \$25 to pay for tuition and book costs in high school.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Reynolds, *The Architectural and Social History of Grant Park and Central Park*, 2; Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 5.

¹⁷⁵ Lencho Othón, Interview by Dr. Pete R. Dimas, June 14, 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 14-15.

¹⁷⁷ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 146-147.

¹⁷⁸ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 15.

While the vocational training emphasis might have guided many students into lower paying occupations rather than encouraging them to continue their education, some set their minds to attend high school. In the 1910s, the Phoenix Union High School campus began to take shape, with the addition of new buildings and the remodeling of the old Churchill residence. All Mexican American children who graduated from eighth grade and continued to high school attended Phoenix Union. Some also attended the new Arizona Vocational School/Phoenix Technical School, established in 1935. This school merged with Phoenix Union in the 1950s.¹⁷⁹

Religious-based schools operated during the first three decades of the twentieth century as well. The Immaculate Heart Church parochial school, located at 9th and Washington Streets and consisting of three floors, was completed in September of 1928. The first floor was an auditorium that could hold 1,000 people. The second floor housed eight classrooms, a library, and an office, while the nuns lived on the third floor. In its opening month, over 200 children attended the school, a good beginning. The new school provided secular and religious education to the Mexican children. Seven nuns from *Las Hermanas del Corazón de María* order (Immaculate Heart Sisters), who had arrived in Phoenix in 1926, provided the instruction. Due to the economic hardships of the Great Depression, the church closed the parochial school between 1932 and 1942.¹⁸⁰

St. Mary's Elementary School continued to operate with two separate buildings until 1926. With the changes occurring at St. Mary's in regards to the Mexican American community, the Immaculate Heart Sisters took over the Mexican school. At this time, all Anglo students went to the new building at 231 N. 3rd Street, and Mexican students integrated into St. Mary's after 5th grade. St. Mary's High School opened in 1917, and in 1928, it became an all-girl's school when Brophy High School was built for male students.¹⁸¹

Recreation and Leisure

Since the earliest years of Phoenix, parks have been an important part of the city's development. The earliest "parks" were natural amenities such as Hole-in-the-Rock at Papago Buttes, local canals, and the Salt River. By the 1890s, private owners opened parks for recreation and amusements, usually connected to swimming. Residential developers began including parks in their subdivisions as an added incentive to buyers. Some of these included the upscale Eastlake Park (1889) and University Park, originally intended to be a site for a Methodist Episcopal university. In many other neighborhoods, especially the growing barrios of the early 1900s, empty lots usually served as the first "neighborhood parks."¹⁸²

One of the first four parks developed in Phoenix was Central Park, mainly patronized by Mexican residents. The City purchased this property in 1910. The early Central Park (later called Salinas Park), whose boundaries included Hadley, First, Second and Tonto Streets, was described as a landscaped area without buildings or play structures. When the City's Parks and Recreation

¹⁷⁹ *Bicentennial Commemorative History of the Phoenix Union High School System*, 31-35.

¹⁸⁰ Reynolds, "Por los Mexicanos," 19-20; Pete R. Dimas, *Progress and a Mexican American Community's Struggle for Existence*, 64.

¹⁸¹ "Golden Jubilee of the Sisters of the Precious Blood," pamphlet, 1953, (n.p.).

¹⁸² "Early Development of Phoenix's City Parks, 1871-1930" in Phoenix Historic Preservation Office Verde Park file.

Department formed in 1934, it was one of the original parks the City inherited. By 1943, the park comprised of 2 acres and had more amenities, including restrooms, play structures, ball courts, a football field, and a shade structure. The creation of a children's wading pool, game courts and play equipment transformed this earlier barren park into a neighborhood gathering place. One report in 1943 noted that "This area is in the center of older, more established Mexican families, and its clientele is primarily Latin American. The fine old shade and well-surfaced areas make it a popular spot, even in the heat of the summer."¹⁸³

One of the most well-known recreational areas in the Mexican community was Grant Park. This park existed as an empty lot with grass and trees until the Parks and Recreation Department renovated it in 1934 through Civil Works Administration funding. By 1944, the park had many amenities, including a swimming and wading pool, a bath house and indoor center, ball courts, football field, softball diamond, piano and radio phonograph. Teams from each of the parks city-wide competed against each other. Grant Park sponsored girls' teams of volleyball, tennis, track and field, and softball. Boys' sports included touch football, basketball, baseball, track and field, softball and tennis. One study of the Parks and Recreation system in Phoenix described Grant Park, located near 1st Avenue and Grant Street, as "the Recreation Department's Mexican Community Center."

Some racial conflict occurred relating to the use of the Grant Park pool. The Spanish American People Organization, headed by Pedro G. de la Lama, and headquartered in the Grant Park community, brought a petition before the City Park and Recreation board in 1935. Since African Americans also used the park facilities, the organization requested that the Grant Park pool be designated for Mexican Americans only. Like many Anglos in Phoenix, some members of the Mexican American community did not wish to share facilities with African Americans. Blacks had mainly patronized Eastlake Park at least since 1920 — in fact, the 1944 Parks and Recreation study identified this park as being "for the colored citizens." Grant and Central Parks were labeled as the "Mexican" parks for the city. Although non-white residents may have patronized other parks in the city, they could not swim in public pools in the predominantly Anglo neighborhoods, such as University or Coronado Parks.¹⁸⁴

Another park important to the Hispanic community is Harmon Park, located near 5th Avenue and Yavapai Street. The City of Phoenix bought the land for Harmon Park in 1927 from the Harmon Foundation of New York. The city purchased the land for the amount of one dollar, with the condition that it was to be used for playground and recreational purposes. Interestingly, the deed came with a clause that stated "the land shall be open to all, except that with written consent of the Harmon Foundation, reasonable racial restrictions may be imposed." The Phoenix Rotary Club's Boys Work Committee helped fund programs and donated playground equipment at Harmon Park during the 1930s.

Much sparser than Grant Park, Harmon initially had two swings, one tennis court and two horseshoe courts, a wading pool, and a roofed sandbox. In 1935, the Southside Taxpayers Improvement Association requested that more of the money given to the city from congressional

¹⁸³ Reynolds, *The Architectural and Social History of Grant Park and Central Park*, 58.

¹⁸⁴ Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 12-13

grants be used upgrade their community, especially Harmon Park. They wanted a swimming pool, an auditorium where free entertainment and movies could be held, and a community center. In 1937, some upgrades at the park were finally completed. The park recreation hall and gym were finished in 1950. Other later cultural amenities included the new, city-operated Harmon Library, built in 1949 at Harmon Park as the first public library in the area south of the railroad tracks.¹⁸⁵

On the east side of Central Avenue, a number of parks used by the Mexican American community developed during this same time. In the early 1900s, Mexican American families patronized Eastlake Park at 16th and Jefferson Streets, even though it developed a direct tie to the African American community. Henrietta Giron grew up near the park in the 1920s and remembers, “during the summer months my grandfather sold *raspadas* (snow cones) at Eastlake Park. He made the syrups himself and bought flavor extracts at Nehi Soda Company. The Fourth of July was a big event at Eastlake, with firecracker stands all around, a baseball game going on, the church ladies all dressed in white and pastel colored dresses having a church picnic.” Long-time resident Joe Torres remembered engaging in competitive swim meets and baseball games at Eastlake in the 1930s.¹⁸⁶

Other parks formed east of Central Avenue. Verde Park, located at 9th and Van Buren Streets on the site of the 1889 city water works and wells, and named for its connection by water pipe to the Verde River, was developed as a park in 1936, and improved with New Deal funds. In 1945, the City built a recreation hall in the park, to house a nursery school. It became a boys club a year



Madison Park softball team, c. 1940.
History of Grant Park Neighborhood.

later. In the early 1950s, the building became a recreation center. Other structures in the park included a 1936 shuffleboard shelter and a 1938 concrete pump house. At 8th Street south of Jefferson Street, Hispanic families patronized the Madison Park, a part of the East Madison Street Settlement property operated by the Episcopal Church. In the 1930s, children at Madison Park formed sports teams and boxing teams in which they competed with kids from other parks.¹⁸⁷

In the *Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood, the Lewis Park held special significance. The community referred to this site as *La Plataforma*. Concepción Joya recalled coming to La Plataforma in the 1920s in her father’s horse-drawn carriage for *Fiestas Patrias*. She reminisces that everyone attending the event wore the *tricolor* (the three colors of the Mexican Flag.) Celia Corrales, born in 1937, remembered cultural festivities and street dances continuing into the 1940s. Individuals from other barrios usually came to these events, as well as local residents. Betty Ann and Fayette Cain, Anglo girls growing up in the area in the 1930s, recall the activities: “On Saturday nights, they would kind of close up (13th Place) and they would have big dances with a beautiful custom. They would ride

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ *Arizona Republic* “Ayer Hoy” September 16, 2001; Joe Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, May 8, 2006.

¹⁸⁷ Phoenix Historic Preservation Office Verde Park file; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 138.

these big horses, golden horses, back and forth...and they would dance out in the street.... We would go to watch.” Other park sites were ones used by Phoenix residents in general for recreational activities. Examples include South Mountain Park, established in 1924, where locals came to enjoy picnics, hold dances, hike, search for petroglyphs, and generally enjoy the mountain preserve.¹⁸⁸

Parks were not the only source of recreation and leisure. Families, young people and adults enjoyed music and dancing at a number of ballrooms and dance halls that developed in the Phoenix area between 1900 and the 1930s. Early dance halls included the Cinderella Ballroom, located upstairs in a hotel near 3rd and Washington Streets, called El Arabe; the Willow Breeze, located at 35th Avenue and Van Buren Street; The Plantation Ballroom at 24th and Washington Streets; the Frolic at 2nd and Van Buren Streets; the Airdome Ballroom, located on 27th Avenue north of McDowell Road; and the Maravilla Gardens, located at 13th Avenue and Grant Street.¹⁸⁹

Some Mexican Americans patronized Joy Land, located near 35th and Van Buren Streets, which existed in the late 1930s and included a swimming pool, picnics, burlesque shows, a beer garden, a café, and a dancehall with marathon dances. This park eventually became the Joy Land Trailer Park by the 1940s. The rival amusement park was the Riverside built in 1919. Located at Central Avenue and the Salt River, the outdoor ballroom could hold up to 3,000 people. Owner Harry Nace (and later Buster Fite) presented some of the biggest headliners in jazz and popular music at the time. For many years the ballroom was segregated. Thursday was Blues night which brought in African Americans. In the 1930s and 1940s, Wednesday and Saturday were Western nights that attracted mainly Anglo crowds, dancing to the sounds of the house band, Bob Fite and the Western Playboys. Mexican night on Sundays featured Latin bands.¹⁹⁰

Mexican Americans in south Phoenix patronized the Broadway Pavilion, an open air ballroom for dances, and its associated park with a swimming pool. This entertainment venue was located at 19th Avenue and Broadway Road, and was owned by the Thonen family.¹⁹¹

As the Hollywood film industry bloomed in the 1910s and 1920s, an ever changing stock of downtown theaters enticed Phoenix residents to experience movie magic. Mexican Americans frequented the string of movie theaters located downtown, from elaborate theaters such as the Rialto, Orpheum, and Fox theaters, to simpler venues such as the Strand. Some theaters sent patrons of Mexican descent upstairs to segregated balconies, while others did not practice strict segregation.

¹⁸⁸ Concepción Joya, Interview by Dr. Pete R. Dimas, June 21, 2006; Celia Corrales, Interview by Pedro Corrales, November 16, 2001; Betty Ann and Fayette Cain, Interview by Lucas Cabrera, June 5, 2002; Phoenix Historic Preservation Office - City Parks file.

¹⁸⁹ Information gathered from HHPS surveys, and Lencho Othón Interview, 14 June 2006.

¹⁹⁰ Jerry Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters in Phoenix*. (Phoenix: Associated Media Services. 1982), 80; Phoenix City Directories, 1936 to 1940.

¹⁹¹ Ralph Peralta and Yvonne Amador HHPS Surveys; local historian Julian Reveles recalled the names of the Broadway Pavilion owners .

Some theaters catered to the Mexican population. For example, Yugoslavian entrepreneur, Martin Gold, built the Ramona Theater in 1920. Although not Hispanic, he became an integral part of that early community through intermarriage and business. Martin had arrived in Arizona in 1879, and after working as a freighter with his brother for several years, he settled in Phoenix in 1890. Intending to farm, he initially purchased 320 acres north of the Salt River, now part of the Sky Harbor Airport. He married Dolores Martinez Schofield and they then moved to a home at 229 S. 4th Street.



Ramona Theater, c. 1925.
Courtesy of George Metzapolous.

At the age of 70, he transformed his Gold Hotel on 3rd and Washington Streets into the Ramona Theater, a very popular entertainment venue for the Mexican community. A clothing store and a “Chilly Parlor” were on either side of the theater for many years.

The theater could seat 1,000 people, and featured air-conditioning. The theater ran movies in English and Spanish, vaudeville shows, and even all Black movies in later years. In 1928, the newspaper advertised burlesque shows featuring the “Gold Spot Dancing Darlings.” The Ramona Theater eventually “became famous for its Friday evening amateur night, when local residents displayed their musical and artistic talents. Musicians from Mexico also presented special variety shows.” The Ramona Theater closed in 1978 after going through several name changes.¹⁹²

Another theater that catered to the Mexican American community in the 1930s was the Rex Theater, opened in 1936. Rex Theater's first showing of a Mexican film attracted more than 3,000 patrons. Originally constructed in 1913 as the 400-seat Reagle Theater, the building, located at Washington and 2nd Streets, went through several name changes, from the Amuzu to the Hidalgo Theater in 1932. Luis Killeen operated the Rex. A native of Ireland, he lost his hotel business, mining investment and agricultural interests in Mexico at the start of the Revolution. He came from Ures, Sonora to Phoenix in 1910. He and his Mexican wife, Antonina, moved to a home across from St. Mary’s Church. The Rex Theater closed in 1951.¹⁹³

Some residents also enjoyed walking to the Union Depot, built in 1923, to watch the trains arrive and get caught up in the activity there. Young people liked to buy magazines on display stands. One long-time resident, Annie Garcia Redondo, recalls that as a young girl, she and her aunt Mary visited the depot at night: “They had all the lights on, and they had music — it was the center of town. There was nothing down that way, the depot was it. And they had hamburger joints, and

¹⁹² Barrios, “The Golds of Gold Alley,”; Barrios, “Martin Gold: Phoenix Entrepreneur”; Jerry Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters in Phoenix*, 81

¹⁹³ Barrios, “The Golds of Gold Alley,” 305; Reynolds, *The Golden Days of Theaters*, 149.

hot dogs, and live music. And people getting on the train and getting off the train, and all this . . . we didn't have money to go anywhere else, so that was enjoyment for us — looking at people all dressed up and getting on the trains.”¹⁹⁴

The cultural life of the community continued to flourish as prior to 1900, with the annual and elaborate *Fiestas Patrias*, the December celebration of *Día De La Virgen de Guadalupe* at Immaculate Heart, as well as American patriotic events. When *El Sol* publishers Jesus and Josefina Franco helped reinvigorate the annual *Fiestas Patrias* in the mid 1930s, the *Junta Patriótica Mexicana* sponsored the celebration each year. Sometimes organizers held this celebration at Eastlake Park or the Phoenix Union High School Stadium, but most often it was held at University Park. This is an interesting site, since for many years Mexican residents were not allowed to swim at the pool there. These types of Mexican cultural events would continue to be observed year after year.¹⁹⁵

Having labored in the cotton fields, witnessed at least two major repatriation efforts, survived the hardships of the Great Depression, started new businesses, and formed stable and expanding barrios, the Mexican American community continued to be an important presence in Phoenix in spite of its social marginalization. With greater numbers of Mexicanos becoming more Americanized by the 1930s, the events of the next decade brought Mexican Americans in Phoenix together and laid the foundation for future growth.



Folk map, “Old Barrios of Phoenix,” drawn by Phoenix resident Rudy Domenzain, n.d.

¹⁹⁴ Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 90-91.

¹⁹⁵ Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45; *El Mensajero*, July 5, 1940, November 1, 1940; Kotlanger, 431; *Arizona Republic* “El Sol: A proud and pioneer newspaper.”, n.d.