

***Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado,
1900-1980***

**Volume I:
*History and Contributions***

**Epilogue:
*Boulder County's Latinas/os
in the Early 2010s***

by

Marjorie K. McIntosh

Distinguished Professor of History Emerita
University of Colorado at Boulder

Written for:
Boulder County Latino History Project

With assistance from:
Longmont Museum

Endorsed by:
**Department of Ethnic Studies,
University of Colorado at Boulder**



Old John Publishing
Palm Springs, California

Copyright © 2016 Marjorie K. McIntosh

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Marjorie K. McIntosh asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

McIntosh, Marjorie K. (Marjorie Keniston)
Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado, 1900-1980
Volume I : History and Contributions / M.K. McIntosh.
332 pages. 229 cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-9863873-3-3 (hardcover)
978-0-9863873-2-6 (paperback)

1. Hispanic Americans--Colorado--Boulder County--History.
2. Colorado--History, Local--20th Century.
3. Boulder County (Colorado)--History.

2015961054

References to Internet Web sites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor Old John Publishing is responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

Epilogue

Boulder County's Latinas/os in the Early 2010s

Before ending this historical account of Latinas/os in Boulder County, we will jump forward in time to look very briefly at immigration patterns after 1980 and present some quantitative information from the early 2010s. The number of Latinas/os in the county as a whole increased substantially in the decades around 2000. Whereas in 1990, they numbered 15,405 (6.8% of the total population), by 2010, there were 39,276 Latino residents, forming 13.3% of the total.¹ Much of that growth came from the arrival of newcomers. An assessment done in 2011 found that only 43% of local Latinas/os of all ages had been born in Colorado.² Another 21% had moved here from other U.S. states or territories, and 36% were foreign born. At that time, 50% of the county's Latino adults were native born U.S. citizens; 12% were naturalized citizens; and the remaining 38% were not citizens (some documented, some not).³

In the early 2010s, Boulder County's Latino community was not only larger, it was more complex. The divisions visible in the late 1960s and 1970s had become even more pronounced, with identifiable sub-groups based upon length of time in the U.S., country of origin, educational and economic status, religious and family patterns, and ethnic/cultural self-identification. Jorge de Santiago, director of El Centro AMISTAD, a non-profit organization in Boulder that works with recent immigrants, distinguished between three main groups of foreign-born Latinas/

¹In 2000, 30,456 people constituted 10.5% of the total (for 1990, "Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau"; for 2000 and 2010, "American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau").

²*Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 39. Of Anglo residents, 33% had been born in Colorado.

³Calculated from *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 41.

os, depending primarily upon when they had arrived here.⁴ The first consisted of immigrants who had been in Boulder County since at least the 1970s. These people, who sometime termed themselves “Chicanos” to separate themselves from newer arrivals, came mainly from Mexico but now thought of themselves as Americans. Well adapted to life in the U.S. and usually enjoying permanent resident status or citizenship, they differed little from Latino residents whose families had lived in this area for far longer. The second group had immigrated between around 1980 and 2000. Although some moved from Mexico, many came from other countries, especially El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras, where war, violence, and political danger forced people to leave.⁵ By 2013, Latinas/os in this category had generally learned how to function adequately in the American setting, their children received good educations, and some had become legal residents through the 1986 Amnesty Law.⁶

Very different were the lives of people in the third group, those who had been here for less than ten years. Although a few moved from Latin American countries to study or for personal reasons, bringing with them the necessary papers and some economic backing, most came from Mexico and arrived with no resources except their willingness to work. Often moving as family groups and lacking formal documentation, these immigrants lived in fear of being arrested and deported. They were hesitant to make use of government-provided social services or legal protection lest they be reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Their children went to school, but the parents—who generally spoke little if any English—had an insecure existence, isolated in many respects from other local residents.

The three towns discussed in this book, which had such contrasting histories in the earlier twentieth century, continued to differ in 2010. Their widely divergent economic situations created dissimilar living and working environments for Latino families. If we use the median family income of all residents as a rough guide, Boulder emerges as by

⁴ Conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, March 14, 2013, for this and the following paragraph.

⁵ See, more generally, *Acuña, Occupied America*, pp. 354-356.

⁶ The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 made it illegal to hire undocumented immigrants and required employers to determine their workers' immigration status, but it also granted legal status to about 3,000,000 immigrants who lacked formal permission to live and work in this country.

far the wealthiest community (\$113,700), though that average conceals pockets of real poverty.⁷ Lafayette was next (\$79,200), thanks to the construction of expensive new housing on the outskirts of town over the past 30 years. Longmont lagged behind (\$58,000), due to more affordable housing and a heavier concentration of recent immigrants. The percentage of Latinas/os in the towns also varied considerably. According to the 2010 Census, in Longmont, 21,850 Latinas/os formed 25% of the total population; in Lafayette, 4,350 Latinas/os formed 17%; but in Boulder, 8,950 Latinas/os formed just 9%.⁸ Because the Latino population included a higher proportion of children than did the Anglo community, they constituted somewhat larger percentages of the enrolment in the two school districts that serve Boulder County.⁹

Some analyses have compared Latinas/os here with other groups. Local Latinas/os were hardworking and comparatively well educated. In 2011, 72% of the county's Latinas/os aged 16 or over (whether documented or not) were engaged in the labor force, as compared to 70% for the total population.¹⁰ They were also better educated than Latinas/os in Colorado as a whole or nationally. In 2011, 24% of local Latino adults had at least a bachelor's degree, well above the 13% found nationally.¹¹ But they lagged behind the figures of 58% with bachelor's degrees among the total population of Boulder County and 36% for all residents of Colorado. High dropout rates among Latino school children may suggest problems in the future. In 2012, only 67% of Latino children in the St. Vrain Valley School District graduated from high school within four years, as compared to 86% for Anglos; in the Boulder Valley School District, 78% of Latino students graduated as compared to 93% for Anglos.¹²

⁷ App. 1.1. In Boulder, 14% of children lived in poverty; in Lafayette, 24%; and in Longmont, 18% (*Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 57).

⁸ *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 14.

⁹ In fall, 2012, Latino students accounted for 17% of the total enrollment in the Boulder Valley District, which includes Boulder and Lafayette plus other towns; in the St. Vrain Valley District, including Longmont, Latinas/os formed 28% of the total (*Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 87).

¹⁰ *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 40. In 2010, the Pew Hispanic Trust estimated that 180,000 undocumented people were living in Colorado, of whom 108,000 (60%) were working, representing 5% of the state's total workforce but taking home less than 3% of the total earnings. Those 108,000 workers created 91,000 additional jobs that had not existed previously (*Boulder County TRENDS 2011*, p. 11).

¹¹ *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 40. For below, see *ibid.*, p. 87.

Despite their high level of employment, Latinas/os were disadvantaged economically. The median household income for this county's Latinas/os in 2011 was only half of that for Anglos: \$35,600 instead of \$70,100.¹³ Just 44% of them owned their homes, as opposed to renting, and that proportion was dropping.¹⁴ Only 54% of Latinas/os had health insurance in 2011-12, as compared with 87% of Anglos.¹⁵ Just 68% of Latinas/os ranked their health as good or excellent, as compared with 92% of Anglos.¹⁶ A particularly troubling figure was that 35% of Latino children were living in poverty in 2011, as compared with just 14% for all children.¹⁷

Although overt discrimination—such as the threat of violence under the KKK and “White Trade Only” signs—had ended long ago, many Latinas/os still felt that they were not entirely welcome in the community and were not treated on an equal basis with Anglos. An assessment conducted in 2013 by the Latino Task Force of Boulder County, the follow-up to a similar study done in 2001, was based on questionnaire information from 386 Latino respondents plus some interviews and focus group discussions.¹⁸ Participants drew attention to Latino contributions to the county, such as the rise in the proportion of respondents who owned their own business, up from 9.5% in 2001 to 14.4% in 2012.¹⁹

But the assessment also highlighted the need for improvement. Discrimination emerged as the third most common area of concern, following employment and education.²⁰ Fewer than one-quarter of the Latino questionnaire respondents felt that Boulder County was a good place for immigrants or racial/ethnic minorities.²¹ Although

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59. The Latino income was also lower than the average of \$40,800 for all Latinas/os in the U.S.

¹⁴ *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment*, p. 14, figures from the 2010 and 2000 U.S. Censuses.

¹⁵ *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89. The Latino figure had risen from 23% in 2000. The federal poverty guideline in 2011 was \$22,350 for a family of four (*ibid.*, inside front cover). Poverty was growing faster in Boulder County than for the U.S. as a whole (*ibid.*, p. 57).

¹⁸ *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment; 2001 Latino Task Force of Boulder County Community Assessment*.

¹⁹ *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 40, and see *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment*, pp. 11-16.

most respondents believed that progress in combatting racism was being made, a majority said they themselves had been discriminated against because they are Latino; they disagreed with the statement that Latinas/os are treated the same as everyone else within the community. In discussions, people referred to negative stereotypes and “subtle but painful” treatment based on the color of their skin, the way they spoke, or their ethnicity; they gave examples both of discrimination by individuals and of institutional practices that made them feel unwelcome or imposed barriers to full participation.²² More than two-thirds of the respondents felt that the police were more likely to stop them because they were Latino.²³ Relationships with the criminal justice system were especially difficult for undocumented immigrants. Boulder County has work to do.

Whereas Latinas/os were barely visible in previous histories of Boulder County, this study makes clear that they helped to shape the nature of the community in many ways between 1900 and 1980. Their stories form an essential component of our knowledge of the past, as this chronological analysis has shown. The companion volume examines social and cultural aspects of local people’s lives across that span and highlights the legacies left by earlier Latinas/os to people living in Boulder County in the early twenty-first century.²⁴

This book adds to our understanding of the place of Latinas/os with respect to several topics of concern to American and Colorado historians more generally. They include migration, labor patterns, racism and discrimination, the impact of wars and veterans, and civil rights activity. Of the four interpretive questions explored in the study, three have been addressed directly in the present volume.²⁵ In considering the roles, experiences, and contributions of women, a subject discussed also in the other book, we have seen how their unpaid labor at home or in the fields formed a necessary part of their family’s economic position,

²¹ *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment*, p. 16. For below, see *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

²² *Boulder County TRENDS 2013*, p. 40.

²³ *2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment*, p. 15.

²⁴ McIntosh, *Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado, 1900-1980*, Vol. II, *Lives and Legacies*.

²⁵ The remaining theme, family relationships, is discussed primarily in Vol. II, Chs. 1, 3, 4A-B, and 5B.

supplementing their husband's earnings. We have noted their increasing role as paid workers in the public economy and their contributions to the community, such as participation in OEO organizations and civil rights activity.

Another issue is how patterns in Boulder County compared with those of communities that lay closer to the heart of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands or that contained large Latino populations. As will be pursued further in the second volume, the experiences of Boulder County's Latinas/os, living on the outer margin of the borderlands in towns dominated numerically, economically, and culturally by Anglos, differed in some key respects from those of people in more heavily Latino settings. In the 1940s and 1950s, Hispanics in Boulder County rarely formed organizations working for the betterment of all Spanish-speaking people, promoted by middle class, educated leaders. Such activity became common here only in the later 1960s and 1970s. The unwillingness of the leaders of community civil rights organizations in this setting to resort to militant tactics during the 1970s and in 1980 contrasted with the more radical approach of some Chicano groups elsewhere. Boulder County residents participated to a limited extent in a local Hispanic/Latino network. They had some cultural and religious contacts with people in Denver and agricultural Fort Lupton, especially during the first half of the twentieth century, and they interacted at least occasionally with groups based in Denver during the period of Chicano activism.²⁶

A final question is how Latinos in Boulder County defined themselves, how they created an ethnic identity. We have observed the fluidity of terminology and described how a few young people from established families tried in the 1950s and early 1960s to formulate an identity that justified their efforts to succeed within an Anglo-dominated public world while at the same time continuing to value aspects of their Latino heritage. In that period, some Latinos felt embarrassed or even shamed by aspects of their own culture, rejections that the Chicano movement of the later 1960s and 1970s tried to overcome. Chicano activists delighted in their ethnicity and wanted to make their traditions visible. They worked to pull together the various elements of the Spanish-background community into a more unified group, one that could fight effectively against racism and discrimination and achieve reforms that

²⁶ For the former, see Vol. II, Chs. 4B and 5A.

would benefit all Latinos. But although they engaged at times with Hispanics/Latinos in other nearby communities, those ethnic ties did not outweigh a desire to create an accepted place within predominantly Anglo Boulder County.

As late as 2014, some highly visible and effective Latino leaders commented that when they were operating in the Anglo world, they had to submerge parts of who they really were. Even when they did, they commonly felt they were not fully respected or given credit for their accomplishments. Conversely, they were at times troubled personally or chastised by others for not maintaining their Latino heritage with sufficient commitment. We may hope that knowing more about the struggles and contributions of earlier Latinas/os to the county in which they live, information based upon sources produced and gathered by local people themselves, will help to strengthen Latinas/os' positive identity and their determination to gain full rights and recognition within the community.

B. Other Books, Articles, and On-Line Materials

2001 Latino Task Force of Boulder County Community Assessment. Longmont, CO: Latino Task Force of Boulder County, 2001.

2013 Boulder County Latino Community Assessment. [Boulder?], CO: Latino Task Force of Boulder County, 2013.

Acuña, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos.* 7th edit., Boston: Longman/Pearson, 2011.

“American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau,” Boulder County, 1910 and 1920. <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Boulder County TRENDS 2011: The Community Foundation’s Report on Key Indicators. Boulder, CO: The Community Foundation, 2011.

Boulder County TRENDS 2013: The Community Foundation’s Report on Key Indicators. Boulder, CO: The Community Foundation, 2013.

McIntosh, Marjorie K. *Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado, 1900-1980*, Vol. II: *Lives and Legacies.* Palm Springs, CA: Old John Publishing, 2016.

“Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau,” Boulder County, 1990. <https://www.census.gov/popest/data/counties/asrh/1990s/tables/co-99-11/crhco90.txt>.