

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

**Volume II:  
*Lives and Legacies***

**Chapter One:  
*Families and the Stages of Life***

by

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# Chapter 1

## Families and the Stages of Life

The family was the core of most Latinas/os' emotional and social world, providing warmth, companionship, and practical support. Nearly everyone formed part of an immediate family, and many people were involved with members of their extended family. Men as well as women engaged actively with children, and people commonly had close ties with their grandparents and/or grandchildren. The family was where cooking and eating took place and children were raised; especially in the first half of the twentieth century, it was also a setting for health care, cultural activities, and religious worship.<sup>1</sup> Marriage was an economic partnership too: women's work within the home and sometimes outside of it was an essential counterpart to the income that men brought in.<sup>2</sup> If *la familia* was the institution that held *la gente* [the people] together, it was often the strength of women that held families together. The main transitions within the life course, extending from birth to death, were usually marked by gatherings at home. This chapter focuses on families and life stages, drawing attention to changes over time between 1900 and 1980. Later parts of the book include additional information.

### A. Families, Parents, and Grandparents

The foundation of most Latino families was the two parents. Although marriages were usually formed as the result of affection between two young people, and although many couples remained tightly bonded throughout their lives, marriage was not defined merely in emotional or sexual terms. David Toledo said in 1978 that he had always found a

<sup>1</sup> As discussed in Chs. 3A-B, 4A-B, and 5B below.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I, Chs. 3A and D, 5A, and 6C.

way to earn money for his family, as a miner and through other jobs.<sup>3</sup> But they managed only because his wife was working at home, taking care of the household and children.

While men were normally the main authority figures within their families, especially in public contexts, their wives controlled the inner workings of the household, played a major role in their children's lives, and often exerted considerable influence over their husbands and brothers. Mothers organized domestic work and generally did most of it themselves, while at the same time making sure that their children were being cared for and taught important human and practical skills.<sup>4</sup> If a mother was herself fully occupied with household tasks or was employed outside the home, she could usually arrange for an older daughter, grandmother, or other relative to look after the younger children. Patriarchal assumptions and reliance upon unpaid female work were common features of the lives of most American women prior to the 1960s and 1970s, not just Latinas.

Fathers and grandfathers were often described as doing things with their children (singing, playing musical instruments for dancing, or telling them stories) when they were at home in the evenings and on those days when they did not have to work.<sup>5</sup> Reina Gallegos, whose parents had come from New Mexico, adored her father, Alejandro Jaramillo, despite his strict moral standards, and loved to spend time with him.<sup>6</sup> "I used to dance with my father out in the garden, out in the fields. He would sing and I would dance with him." Mary Martinez and her sisters lived with their grandparents northeast of Longmont. She recalled listening to her grandfather, who described himself as an Aztec Indian, as he talked about the ceremonial rituals his parents used to perform at the top of pyramids in Mexico and as he demonstrated Indian dances to them.<sup>7</sup> Many photos preserved by families show fathers with their children, in both earlier and more recent periods.<sup>8</sup>

A recurring theme in these Latino families was the importance of grandparents and sometimes great-grandparents. In some cases,

<sup>3</sup> Toledo, David, interview, c. 1978.

<sup>4</sup> For women's work within the household, see Vol. I, Ch. 3D.

<sup>5</sup> See Ch. 4A-B below.

<sup>6</sup> Gallegos, Reina, interview, c. 1987. For Reina's love of dancing as an adult, see Illus. 4.8 below.

<sup>7</sup> Martinez, Mary, interview, 1988. See also "Aztec dancers."

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., "Father Wearing Hat with Four Children," "Ray Perez with baby," "Tony Quintana holding baby," and "Tony Quintana with three sons."



*Illus. 1.1. Studio portrait of father holding baby girl with two boys*



*Illus. 1.2. Father smoking pipe with two young children*



*Illus. 1.3. Secundino Herrera with children at baby's birthday*

an older couple actually took in and raised their grandchildren. That pattern was common if one of their daughters died or was unable to bring up her children. When Elvinia ("Bea") Martinez Borrego, later of Longmont, was orphaned at age three, she went to live with her grandmother in Cebolla, New Mexico.<sup>9</sup> The older woman supported herself as a midwife and operator of a dancehall. J. H. Cortez and his wife Sabina, who came to the Longmont area as beet workers and settled in the town sometime around 1915, raised seven of their grandchildren after one of their sons-in-law abandoned his family and their daughter died.<sup>10</sup> Juan and Josephine Martinez had ten children between 1924 and 1946, eight of whom lived; in 1943 they adopted their first-born grandchild.<sup>11</sup> Few references were made in the Boulder County sources to illegitimate children, but such babies were apparently raised usually by grandparents or other relatives.

Grandparental involvement with children continued later in the century. Carmen Ramirez, born in 1960 and raised in El Paso, told a powerful story about her grandparents' role in her life.<sup>12</sup> Her birth mother did not want her children and abandoned them in Florida when Carmen was 3 years old and her brother was 18 months. Carmen's grandmother, Juana Olguin Gandara, "being a strong *Mejicana catolica*, said '*Mi sangre no anda rodando*' [My blood does not go running around] and sent my aunt, *mi tia* Concha, who became my mother, to get us in Florida." Juana also bought a suit for her son, the children's father, and sent him along to help bring the children back. She "wanted to make sure that we were raised by family. That was probably the biggest gift." Carmen lived with her grandparents and her aunt Concha until the older people's death.

Grandparents were important in other ways as well. Heriberto ("Beto") Moreno, the son of a bartender, was born in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.<sup>13</sup> When he was in his teens, around 1960, he came across the border to El Paso, sponsored by his grandparents, who were already living there. Linda Arroyo-Holmstrom, born in 1956, recalled how

<sup>9</sup> "Borrego, Albert and Elvinia ("Bea") Martinez, biography." For other grandparents and great-grandparents, see "Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies" and "Five generations of women."

<sup>10</sup> Cordova, Patsy, interview, c. 1987, "Cortez, Jose Hilario ("J. H.") and Maria Sabina, biography," and "Joseph and Sabina Cortez."

<sup>11</sup> "Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography."

<sup>12</sup> Ramirez, Carmen, interview, 2013, for this and below.

<sup>13</sup> Moreno, Heriberto ("Beto"), interview, 2013.





*Illus. 1.4. Four children  
with an old woman*



*Illus. 1.5. Mr. and Mrs. Cortez with  
granddaughter Mercy Martinez  
and her children*



*Illus. 1.6. Four generations of the Montour family of Lafayette, 1987*

easy it was to skip across from her own backyard in Boulder to her grandparents' house, which was immediately behind them across the alley.<sup>14</sup> The elder generation formed the emotional and physical heart of Linda's large group of relatives.

It almost seemed like my extended family was my immediate family, because we would get together every Sunday. It was church and then after that everyone would meet at my grandparents' house, the Arroyos' house, and we'd all eat together. That was just typical, and we of course celebrated every birthday. I had eighteen first cousins in Boulder, and so that was my social life too. I didn't need anything other than my immediate and extended family. We were really close, . . . we were so blessed.

Aunts and uncles too might take in children. Carmen and Romaldo Razo came to the Lafayette area in 1914 from Durango, Mexico.<sup>15</sup> They had five children of their own, but they also adopted two nephews and raised another six nieces and nephews after their parents were killed in a car accident. Tom Abila, born around 1933, lived at first with his grandparents, but when his grandmother became bedridden, he moved in with his aunt Sarah.<sup>16</sup> Doris Ogeda Gonzales's mother was left on her own in the early 1930s with three young children when her husband returned to Mexico to visit his ailing mother but was unable to come back across the border.<sup>17</sup> She first found work bottling beer during Prohibition but later cleaned houses in Boulder. When she came down with tuberculosis, she was placed into the local sanitarium. At that point Doris's uncle, Pete Saragosa, and his wife Nellie took in the children. For the next four years they lived in the Saragosas' large household, which included other relatives too.

Even if they did not raise children entirely, aunts and uncles were often vital members of the extended family unit. Canuto and Gregoria Martinez's adult children who were living in Boulder in the 1940s and 1950 were in regular contact thanks to their sister Lola. One of her nephews later wrote a deeply appreciative account of her role within the family. When Carmen Ramirez was living on the streets in El Paso during high school, it was her aunt Concha who came to find her every week, bringing food and other necessities.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Arroyo-Holmstrom, Linda, interview, 2013, for this and below.

<sup>15</sup> Montour, Eleanor, interview, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

<sup>17</sup> Gonzales, Doris, interview, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Ramirez, Carmen, interview, 2013.



## Lola Martinez

*Illus. 1.7. Biography and photo of Lola Martinez*

Lola Martinez (1913-1974) was born in Pueblo to Canuto and Gregoria Martinez. She was one of ten children. Her days of hard work in the fields alongside her family gave her special sensitivity to those who need a hand up or an ear to just listen. She worked in the defense industry during WWII on the assembly line constructing aircraft. After the war, she returned to work as a domestic servant for well-off families on the "Hill". She was a very proud person. During a Nixon fundraiser in 1960, a young Nixon supporter wanted to pin a Nixon button on her. The young Nixon supporter must have thought domestic servants were a fixture to be decorated. My Aunt Lola spoke up, "Don't pin that Nixon button on me, 'I will vote for Kennedy'". She could have been fired but she wasn't.



Aunt Lola was known as the glue that kept the extended Martinez family together in good and bad times. Her home was always open to the extended family; to newlyweds who needed a place to stay for a couple of months until moving on to their own home; to a family who had lost a parent; to a family whose primary bread earner had been hurt in an accident; but best of all, her home was open for birthdays, holidays, for baptisms<sup>19</sup>, for making tamales for New Year's; and when the extended Martinez family needed a place to gather. (Espinosa, Hernandez, Madrigal, Pacheco and, of course, Martinez) Aunt Lola epitomized the values and strength, beauty and caring of the Mexican American extended family.

Although extended families whose members lived near each other were able to stay in close contact, physical distance and national borders weakened some ties. For immigrants from other countries, it might be difficult to keep in touch through letters or—later—telephone calls; travelling to one's old home might be impossible without the necessary papers.<sup>19</sup> Even among American-born Latinas/os, maintaining family relationships became harder as more people moved around the country in connection with their work, especially after the late 1960s.

Many Latino families prior to the mid-twentieth century were very large, with more children than is common in the 2010s. Because siblings and other relatives who lived nearby could help take care of younger children, they generally received the love and attention they needed to develop well. Indeed, affection for children was part of Latino culture. People liked having big households filled with youngsters of various

<sup>19</sup> Such problems disrupted the cultural borderland that in the early twentieth century spanned the southwestern U.S. and northernmost Mexican states (see Vol. I, Ch. 1B). For the impact of the border in the early twenty-first century, see the Epilogue below.

### Archuleta Family, 1951

From top left to right: Clara, 19 yrs; Clofes, mother;  
Marylou, 14 yrs; Becky 19 yrs; Juan, father; Frank Jr., 2 yrs;  
Juanita, 12 yrs; Cora, 25 yrs; Frank Sr. 25 yrs; Delores  
Gabriella, cousin, 13 yrs; Richard Gabriella, cousin, 7 yrs;  
Archie Archuleta, 5 yrs; Ramona, 9 yrs



*Illus. 1.8. Archuleta family in 1951*

ages, as reflected in family photos.<sup>20</sup> Further, during the first part of the twentieth century, children could contribute to the household's net income.<sup>21</sup> For field workers, the labor of children and teenagers might be a necessity, and mines offered employment to older boys.

An early age of marriage for women contributed to big families. Prior to around 1960, some girls married as young as 14 or 15, and most were married by the time they reached 20. Methods of birth control were not yet available, so many people of all ethnicities and races had big families. Even when birth control became readily accessible, the Catholic Church did not accept its use. Most women breast-fed their babies, which decreased ovulation and lessened the chances that they would become pregnant soon after the birth of the previous child. But if a woman had a baby every two or three years from her mid-teens to her mid-40s, that would result in something like 10-15 births. The extended range of years over which women bore children dissolved sharp lines between generations: people might easily have aunts and uncles younger than themselves and nieces and nephews who were older.

Some Latino households became larger by taking in unrelated

<sup>20</sup> See also Illus. 4.1 below and "Gonzales family portrait."

<sup>21</sup> See Vol. I, Ch. 3D for child labor.



*Illus. 1.9. Parents with baby and five other children*

children.<sup>22</sup> Teresa Alvarez, born in Zacatecas, Mexico in 1897, came to Boulder with her parents as a child.<sup>23</sup> When they died, she went to live with a foster family who lived in the beet fields near Fort Collins. Roseann Chavez Ortega's Mexican-born grandparents, who were living in Aguilar around 1920, were unable to have children of their own, so they adopted the illegitimate baby of an Italian family; she later became Roseann's mother.<sup>24</sup> Rudy and Theresa Vigil of Lafayette were foster parents for 34 children over a period of 20 years starting in the late 1960s.<sup>25</sup> Very rarely were children placed in orphanages. The only instance of that practice encountered in this study was provided by Dolores Silva, a long-time resident of Lafayette.<sup>26</sup> She was born at home in Denver in 1929, assisted by a black midwife. When her mother, who had come north from Taos, New Mexico, and her father, a professional baseball player, divorced, their older children were sent to an orphanage, but Dolores was a baby and stayed with her mother and step-father.

<sup>22</sup> For abduction of children, as was common in parts of the Southwest until the early twentieth century, see Vol. I, Ch. 2B.

<sup>23</sup> Alvarez, Teresa, interview, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Ortega, Roseann Chavez, interview, 1986.

<sup>25</sup> "Vigil, Rudy and Theresa, biography."

<sup>26</sup> Silva, Dolores, interview, 2013.

John S. Chavez with his brothers and sister, this picture was taken in Ft. Collins, CO. in 1919.  
 Front row: John (baby) Louie (seated) Thelma, Ermalinda (seated) Keith  
 Back row: Ben, Patrick and Larry Chavez

Ermalinda, was the oldest of the children when this picture was taken she was 24 years old. Louie was 21 years old so there was quite a bit of age difference between our Dad (John) and his oldest siblings.



*Illus. 1.10. Eight Chavez siblings in 1919, ranging from a baby to 24 years old*

From the 1960s onwards, family size began to drop, especially among urban residents and people who had gone to high school. In a characteristic sequence, Esther Blazón, the daughter of a field worker, was born in 1943, near the middle of her fifteen brothers and sisters, fourteen of whom survived.<sup>27</sup> Esther's husband William ("Hank") was one of eight children raised on a farm northeast of Longmont. But she and Hank had only three children. Migrant workers and more recent immigrants were likely to have large families right through the twentieth century.

The involvement of men with their children or grandchildren as seen in the Boulder County evidence highlights a contrast between how Latinas/os have traditionally used the term *macho* and the meaning it has acquired in wider American culture. In earlier Latino usage, a man described as *macho* was a good provider for his family in economic terms and a good husband and father, someone who loved his children and enjoyed spending time with them; within the community, he acted with dignity and hoped to win respect from others. The concept of *macho* as referring to a tough young male with attitude and a swagger

<sup>27</sup> Blazón, Esther, interview, 2013.

comes largely from the world of mass media and entertainment, not from within Latino culture itself.

Yet *machismo* had a darker side. The culturally-defined dominance of men within Latino households could potentially serve as a justification for excessive male control over women and children, drinking that squandered the family's resources, and abuse within the home, particularly if a man felt that his authority was being challenged. Although interviews and written accounts of Boulder County's Latinas/os rarely mention problems within marriages, this silence presumably results in part from people's unwillingness to air family difficulties in public. Private conversations indicate that some husbands drank heavily and at times became verbally or physically abusive. Women might be angry with their husbands because of their insistence upon making decisions for the entire family, and at least an occasional wife was not fully committed to her children. Such problems were and still are common within households of all cultural backgrounds, especially those that are living in poverty, where husbands and wives are exhausted from demanding physical labor, and which share cramped and ill-equipped housing.

Even if spouses argued and sometimes fought, however, they rarely divorced. An unhappy couple's relatives would have put great pressure on them to stay together, and the Catholic Church opposed divorce strongly, prohibiting a divorced person from remarrying in a religious ceremony. Further, there were so few good employment opportunities for women outside the family until the later 1960s and 1970s that a woman who left her husband would have found it extremely difficult to support herself and her children, unless her own relatives took them in. So long as a marriage remained an economic partnership and an adequate place for bringing up children, it could continue even if the spouses gained much of their emotional support from their *comadres*, *compadres*, or other people.

## **B. Key Stages, Birth to Death**

Families formed the setting for the major transition points within the life course of individual people. Until at least the 1960s, mothers generally gave birth to their babies at home, with help only from a midwife or a female relative or friend. Few people mentioned specifically that

their mothers or grandmothers had died in childbirth, but the frequency with which older people took in orphaned relatives probably stems in part from that situation.<sup>28</sup> Dora Bernal, who was born in 1911 to a family in the San Luis Valley, was one of four girls and four boys.<sup>29</sup> All the babies were born at home with a midwife assisting except the last, for whose birth a doctor was summoned. Roseann Chavez Ortega, who was living with her parents in a tenant farmer's house east of Boulder in the 1950s, described going with her mother and grandmother to a little shack near them where a Latino beet harvester's family was staying.<sup>30</sup> Her grandmother knew that the family was very poor and that the mother, who had several small children, was pregnant. When they arrived, they found that the woman was already in labor, so Roseann's grandmother delivered the baby and took care of the mother. The baby was born dead or died shortly after birth, whereupon Roseann's grandmother placed the body into a little box and buried it. By the later 1940s, some women—especially those living in towns—gave birth in hospitals. Roy Maestas's mother had been aided by a midwife when he was born in New Mexico in 1909, but his wife's children were born in hospitals in Boulder County.<sup>31</sup>

Families who lived near a church and could afford the payment generally wanted to have their children baptized or christened. This ceremony included giving the baby its formal name and appointing its *padrinos* (godparents).<sup>32</sup> Babies were commonly named after relatives or close friends of their parents. Candace Arroyo said that she had been named after her grandfathers.<sup>33</sup> Her mother's father was named Candido and her father's father was José, so she was named Candida José, though she called herself Candace. Her sister, Linda Diana, was named after her grandfather's sister, Hermilinda, and her mother, Diana. Her brother was given the name Patrick Jonathan after his father, Patricio, and his father's best friend, Jonathan. After the baptism at church, births were commonly celebrated with a family gathering at home.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> After Tony Montour, Sr.'s mother died while giving birth to him, the family created a composite photo showing him as a baby with his mother before she became pregnant ("Created photo, Tony Montour, Sr.).

<sup>29</sup> Bernal, Dora, interview, 1978.

<sup>30</sup> Ortega, Roseann Chavez, interview, 1986.

<sup>31</sup> Maestas, Roy, interview, 1978.

<sup>32</sup> For photos, see "Shirley Roybal at baptism" and "Angie and Ray Perez at christening."

<sup>33</sup> Arroyo, Candace, interview, 1977.

<sup>34</sup> "Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography."



*Illus. 1.11. Children at a birthday party*



How birthdays were handled varied between families and over time. Virginia Madrigal Martinez said that her grandparents, who had come to Boulder County from Mexico in 1910, had been given their saint's names at birth.<sup>35</sup> They celebrated their birthdays with a big party. "There was music, by my grandfather and his sons, good food, excellent wine, singing and dancing. Everyone had a good time. I will never forget those gatherings." Three of the older Latinas/os living in the Water + Goss Streets area of Boulder (Mrs. Esther Maes, E. E. Bernal, and Roy Maestas) had birthdays on the same day, and their families would get together.<sup>36</sup> After the mid-twentieth century, parents were increasingly likely to put on birthday parties for children with other young guests.

In a long interview done in 1976, Teresa Alvarez, who was then 79 years old, talked about several aspects of raising young children.<sup>37</sup> In the 1910s-1930s, a time when baby bottles and infant formula were rare and expensive, nearly all mothers breast-fed their babies. Teresa said she had plenty of milk for all of her nine babies that lived past infancy except for one, whom she bottle fed. She usually had enough milk to help feed the babies of other women who lived near them in the mining camps

<sup>35</sup> "Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies."

<sup>36</sup> "Maestas, Pedro (Roy), Ruby, and Abe, biography." For this neighborhood, see Ch. 2B below.

<sup>37</sup> Alvarez, Teresa, interview, 1976, for this paragraph and the next.



*Illus. 1.12. Two toddlers in a wash tub*

around Lafayette but did not have sufficient milk themselves. Teresa normally continued breast-feeding her babies until they were about two years old, when she began to give them well cooked oatmeal or mashed potatoes mixed with milk. Keeping babies clean was a special challenge if the dwelling lacked water and heat, though conditions improved for most families later.<sup>38</sup>

The next step was toilet training. Teresa, who lived in housing with no indoor water or toilets when her children were small, described how she did it. She started with a little potty, a wooden seat with a bowl under it that could be used inside and then emptied into the outhouse. As the child grew older and larger, her husband would put a board across the seat in the outhouse to make it safe. Eventually the child could use the regular outhouse seat without danger of falling in.<sup>39</sup>

As children moved past the toddler stage, urban ones had more chances to interact with youngsters outside their own families than did rural ones. Younger children in Longmont enjoyed playing with their friends close to home or sometimes going swimming.<sup>40</sup> Older ones in

<sup>38</sup> See also "Angie Perez bathing baby."

<sup>39</sup> Cf. "Two girls in an outhouse."

<sup>40</sup> E.g., "Three young children playing in yard" and "Children swimming in Longmont." For below, see Ch. 4C below.

Boulder played pick-up ballgames in a nearby vacant lot. By the 1950s, teens were becoming increasingly involved in social or athletic activities with their Latino and sometimes Anglo peers. Nearly all Latino children living in Boulder County appear to have attended school.<sup>41</sup> While some dropped out during or at the end of elementary school to start working, a growing number continued into secondary education. By their early teens, however, even those who were still in school were expected to contribute to the family's income by working during the summers and/or in the afternoons and weekends.

During the early part of the century, and for rural households into the 1960s, families had an important role in introducing young people to suitable partners and giving approval to marriages. Virginia Madrigal Martinez wrote in 2012 about how young people in her grandparents' generations chose their spouse.

Usually a young woman picked a young man who was a member of their family's friends. The parents played a big part in the couple's relationship. My grandmother married at 14 years of age. It seems young, but they learned how to cook and take care of their brothers and sisters at an early age. When my grandparents wanted to get married, he had to ask her father for her hand in marriage. After two weeks, my grandfather would get his answer.<sup>42</sup>

In that pattern, parents kept a close eye on their daughters' social lives. Teresa Alvarez's husband was unusually strict. When her daughters were growing up in Lafayette in the 1930s, her husband did not want them to date at all.<sup>43</sup> A boy needed to park his car in the back alley, and once the girl had checked that her father was not looking, she would slip out to join him. If the couple later decided to marry, the boy would come to ask Teresa's husband for permission. The father was upset that they had been going out without his knowledge, but in the end he always said yes.

By the later 1940s and 1950s, urban Latinas/os in their teens and early twenties had more freedom. Now they commonly met possible marriage partners through their friends or at dances. Linda Arroyo-Holmstrom said that her dad, Pat, met his future wife, Diana, thanks to a good friend of his who was dating a friend of Diana's. Pat's friend thought,

<sup>41</sup> See Ch. 6C below.

<sup>42</sup> "Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies."

<sup>43</sup> Alvarez, Teresa, interview, 1976.

“Boy, Diana would be the perfect woman for Pat, and so he introduced my father to my mother, and that’s when they started dating.”<sup>44</sup> Parents nevertheless maintained some control over their daughters’ social lives. Marcella Diaz, who grew up in Boulder’s Water + Goss Streets community in the later 1940s and 1950s, remembered that “the girls were allowed to date, but the boys had to come to the door and ask for permission to take us out. If the boy was courteous and respectful, then permission was granted and a curfew was given. The curfew was usually 10:00 p.m. If we returned late, the curfew for the next date was changed to an earlier time.”<sup>45</sup>

Starting in the post-World War II period, when many young women living in towns had at least part-time jobs, their employment offered a wider range of social contacts. Mary Gonzales first met her future husband, Richard Tafoya, in the late 1940s, when she was 14 years old.<sup>46</sup> Seven years later, she was frying hamburgers one day at the City Café, owned by her dad, Alex Gonzales. Richard, who had just returned from fighting in Korea, came into the café and saw a picture of Mary that Alex had put up on the wall.

Richard said, “I know that girl.”

Dad was always suspicious and wanted to know how Richard knew me. Richard explained that we had picked beans together.

“Well, she’s in the kitchen now,” Dad told him.

Richard came back to the kitchen to talk with me. He was really good-looking and he had dimples. He stayed and stayed.

“You have to go now,” I told him. “You’ll get me in trouble.”

I had to sneak out to see Richard. We’d meet at Collyer Park. I was like Cinderella: I had to get home by midnight, before Dad got home from working the swing shift at the mine.<sup>47</sup>

Even in Boulder, however, where some young Latinas worked full-time for a few years before marriage, we see little evidence of the gender developments found in cities like Los Angeles and El Paso during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>48</sup> There second-generation Mexican women, some of whom had jobs in defense-related industries, used their own incomes

<sup>44</sup> Arroyo-Holmstrom, Linda, interview, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> “Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography.”

<sup>46</sup> Tafoya, Mary Gonzales, interview, 2009, for this and below.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Alvarez, *Power of the Zoot*, esp. chs. 3-4, Catherine Ramirez, *Woman in the Zoot Suit*, esp. chs. 1-2, and Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, esp. ch. 4.

to support new leisure activities: buying clothes and makeup, wearing distinctive hair styles, going out with a group of other girls to enjoy jazz music and jitterbug dancing, and dating men with little if any supervision. Some formed gangs that donned Zoot Suit or *pachuca* clothing.<sup>49</sup> These behaviors blurred familiar definitions of masculinity and femininity and conflicted with the expectations for appropriate female behavior held by their older relatives and perhaps by prospective husbands. Recent scholarship argues that as these urban women negotiated the resulting gender tension, they created a new model of Mexican American womanhood, one distinct from both earlier Latino cultural patterns and the dominant Anglo world around them.<sup>50</sup>

In Boulder, however, young Latinas remained more conservative, in part because their families thought it important to demonstrate respectability as a way of promoting acceptance by Anglo culture.<sup>51</sup> Further, although some young people had Anglo friends of the same sex, they do not seem to have engaged in inter-racial or inter-ethnic dating, as sometimes occurred in California.<sup>52</sup> Nearly all Boulder County Latinas/os married people of similar ethnic background until later in the century.

Marriage was a major event, often commemorated in a formal photograph of the couple or the wedding party.<sup>53</sup> Some undated but historic photos kept by Longmont families in the 1980s show traditional

<sup>49</sup> It often included a relatively short shirt or long draped slacks, a jacket of finger-tip length, bobby socks or fishnet stockings, dark lipstick and/or other makeup, and pompadoured, upswept hair (Catherine Ramirez, *Woman in the Zoot Suit*, p. xii and ch.1, Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, pp. 9 and 11, and Alvarez, *Power of the Zoot*, p. 88).

<sup>50</sup> See note 47 above.

<sup>51</sup> See Vol. I, Ch. 5C. The first indication of distinctive Mexican American clothing and body art in the Boulder County materials comes from 1987: "Cholos y Cholas." For atypical Boulder women who enjoyed an active social life in California during the 1940s and 1950s, see Rose Olivas and Dora Bernal, below.

<sup>52</sup> Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, ch. 4. Interracial marriage was banned in Colorado until 1957, except for southern areas of the state that had formerly belonged to Mexico (Abbott et al., *Colorado*, p. 353). The racial definition of Latinas/os with respect to marriage was ill defined.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g. "Joseph and Sabina Cortez," "Wedding of John S. and Tillie Chavez, 1940," "Edward John Tafoya and Delia Mary Vargas, wedding commemoration," "Wedding of Emma Gomez and John Martinez," "Wedding of John Anthony Rivera and Marilyn Martinez Rivera," "Wedding of Clofes Luisa Mondragon and Juan Francisco Archuleta," "Wedding of Becky and Dave Ortega," and "Martinez, Fabricio, and Letia Madrid on wedding day."



*Illus. 1.13. Small group at a traditional wedding, with guitar*

weddings in New Mexico and southern Colorado.<sup>54</sup> Many other images document later weddings. Marriages were usually celebrated with a religious service, even if it was not legally necessary. When Roy Maestas married around 1930, he was working at a coal mine in southern Colorado and could not leave his job to go to church.<sup>55</sup> But when the couple moved to Lafayette in the late 1930s, they had a (belated) religious wedding.

If at all possible, couples wanted to throw some kind of a party to celebrate their marriage. Even if they were living in poverty, they would save or borrow money or ask for contributions from friends in order to make a gathering possible. Teve Ojeda, who moved to Erie in 1926, described how wedding festivities there were financed.<sup>56</sup> She said that by custom the bride's parents paid for the marriage ceremony, while the groom covered the cost of her dress and other accessories. The maid of honor hosted a wedding breakfast for the bride and paid for the cake. Everyone involved in the wedding contributed money to rent a hall and pay a band for the dance.

Among some established Boulder families, planning and saving for a wedding could take six months to a year. The event itself might extend

<sup>54</sup> See also Vol. I, Illus. 2.4.

<sup>55</sup> Maestas, Roy, interview, 1978.

<sup>56</sup> Adelfang, ed., *Erie*, p. 41. Erie lies a few miles NE of Lafayette.





*Illus. 1.14. Garcia wedding photo, 1913*



*Illus. 1.15. Wedding, Jennie Razo and Richard Romero, 1950*

over two days: dinner the day before, the wedding the next morning at church, then a reception and dance later that afternoon and evening. Marcella Diaz described her wedding in 1959, which started with a marriage ceremony at Sacred Heart Church, to which the family members of the bride and groom plus local friends were invited.<sup>57</sup> It was followed by a reception and dance at home, with food prepared by the extended family and open to anyone who wanted to attend. The dance at her wedding included a religious component as well. "The parents of both the bride and the groom stood over the kneeling newly-weds, and said a special prayer and blessed the couple. The parents' blessing culminated in them making the sign of the cross over the bride and groom. I always thought this a very special part of my wedding." By the later 1970s, some couples were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries with large family parties and/or renewing their vows in church, likewise recorded in photos.<sup>58</sup>

Funerals and the associated customs formed the final transition. They involved the whole family: there was no attempt to shield children from the reality of death and burial. Virginia Madrigal Martinez said that her grandparents took her to several funerals when she was a little girl living in Boulder in the late 1930s.<sup>59</sup> "In those days the wake was held at the person's home. All his friends gathered around him and told stories about the 'deceased.' The women of the family would cry and howl over the body. After the crying stopped, food and drink was served and it turned into a big party. The next day the funeral was held at the church; he then was taken to the cemetery." Marcella Diaz commented, "Since most people died at home, in big families *la muerte* was no stranger. We didn't think of death as happening only to someone else. . . . As children we were taken to the *velorio* (wake) for the *difunto* (the deceased). We were taught to pay our last respects and express our *pesame* (condolences), and to accompany the casket to the cemetery."<sup>60</sup>

Lowering the casket into the grave was an important ritual, because everyone present threw a little earth onto it. As late as 1977, Susie Gomez Chacon said that Latinas/os were objecting to the practice

<sup>57</sup> "Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography."

<sup>58</sup> "Wedding and 50th Wedding Anniversary of Tony Montour, Sr., and Julia Rodriguez Montour," "Mr. and Mrs. Alex Gonzales's 50th wedding anniversary," "Delia and Edward Tafoya's 50th wedding anniversary," and "Delia and Edward Tafoya, Renewal of vows."

<sup>59</sup> "Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies."

<sup>60</sup> "Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography."



**Illus. 1.16.** *Petra and Rita Quintana tending a grave, Longmont*

among some morticians of asking people to leave the cemetery before that happened.<sup>61</sup> They said, “No, I’m going to stay until that casket goes down, because we still have dirt for the casket.” The grave was then maintained by family members.

A death in the family was traditionally followed by a period of mourning. Marcella Diaz commented that when she was growing up with her conservative grandparents, the immediate and extended family of the deceased were expected to wear “black or dark colors for periods, as imposed by patriarchs/matriarchs [within the family], which could be up to one year. There were also other restrictions imposed. No singing, no music or such.”<sup>62</sup> Mourning became less extensive later. The death of one spouse could leave the survivor without skills and resources, a need to which various senior service organizations in the county were responding by the 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

Early cemetery listings for Longmont, Lafayette, and Boulder imply that not all Latino residents were buried in official graveyards with stones giving their name and date of death. If we compare the number of people with Latino surnames included in the list of Lafayette gravestones

<sup>61</sup> Chacon, Susie, interview, 1977.

<sup>62</sup> “Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography.”

<sup>63</sup> E.g., “Sally Martinez as an Elderly Widow.”

prior to the 1960s with the total number of Latinas/os living in the town during those decades, there are fewer recorded burials than we should have seen.<sup>64</sup> The number of cemetery burials in Longmont is somewhat too low, as is Boulder's prior to the 1930s. People who did not live near a church may have been unable to arrange for formal burial; infants were probably especially likely to have been buried close to where the family was living at the time. Even town dwellers may not have been able to pay for a cemetery plot, or at least not for a grave marker with full information.

Latino families displayed great resiliency across the generations discussed here. The conception of marriage as an economic partnership for the good of the whole family, promoting the well-being of the children, often trumped a desire to preserve customary gender and generational roles. Many fathers in Boulder County adjusted to the increase in formal education, which might mean that their children were better able to function within the Anglo world than they were.<sup>65</sup> Many husbands accommodated themselves to female employment outside the home, including positions that put women into regular contact with other men or brought public visibility.<sup>66</sup> There is, however, some evidence of inter-generational tension, especially between immigrant parents/grandparents and younger people who had become more acculturated to Anglo ways through schooling and jobs.<sup>67</sup> Latino families were generally able to continue providing warmth and backing for their members precisely because of their flexibility. One of the legacies left by earlier Latinas/os to people living in Boulder County in the early twenty-first century was the emotional and practical support given by strong but adaptable families.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> For the minimum number of adult residents, see Vol. I, App. 1.2.

<sup>65</sup> See Ch. 6 below.

<sup>66</sup> See Vol. I, Chs. 5A and 6C.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Vol. I, Chs. 5C and 7A.

<sup>68</sup> Some contemporary Latino families, however, had been disrupted by immigration: see the lives of the interns described in the Epilogue, below.

## List of Illustrations, with Credits

All the images listed below are hyperlinked to their original online sources. They can be viewed by clicking on the underlined blue text at the end of each entry. Those that have a reference number beginning with “BCLHP” are on the Boulder County Latino History website:

<http://bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu/>

It contains hundreds of additional photos and other types of material as well.

- 1.1. Studio portrait of father holding baby girl with two boys. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-431](#).
- 1.2. Father smoking pipe with two young children. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-398](#).
- 1.3. Secundino Herrera with children at baby's birthday. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-101](#).
- 1.4. Four children with an old woman. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-373](#).
- 1.5. Mr. and Mrs. Cortez with granddaughter Mercy Martinez and her children. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-389](#).
- 1.6. Four generations of the Montour family of Lafayette, 1987. Courtesy of Eleanor Montour. [BCLHP-FP-176](#).
- 1.7. Biography and photo of Lola Martinez, written by Phil Hernandez in 2012. Courtesy of Tom Martinez. [BCLHP-FP-050](#).
- 1.8. Archuleta family in 1951. Courtesy of Becky Archuleta. [BCLHP-FP-222](#).
- 1.9. Parents with baby and five other children. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-397](#).
- 1.10. Eight Chavez siblings in 1919, ranging from a baby to 24 years old. Courtesy of Mary Ellen Chavez. [BCLHP-FP-098](#).
- 1.11. Children at a birthday party. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-001](#).
- 1.12. Two toddlers in a wash tub. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-141](#).
- 1.13. Small group at a traditional wedding, with guitar, in front of adobe house. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-252](#).
- 1.14. Garcia wedding photo, 1913. Courtesy of Gilbert Espinoza. [BCLHP-FP-090](#).

- 1.15.** Wedding, Jennie Razo and Richard Romero, 1950. Courtesy of Eleanor Montour. [BCLHP-FP-186](#).
- 1.16.** Petra and Rita Quintana tending a grave, Longmont. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-046](#).



# Sources

## Explanations

Most of the items listed below are hyperlinked to their original online sources. They can be viewed by clicking on the underlined blue text at the end of each entry.

**BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.** Materials collected by the Boulder County Latino History Project, 2013-2014. Deposited at Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library.

**BCLHP references.**<sup>1</sup> These provide the ID number for items accessible on the Boulder County Latino History website, [bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu](http://bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu). It contains hundreds of other sources, which can be searched in various ways.

If a given item contains multiple pages on the website, only the initial ID number is shown here; the following pages are linked to that one.

**Carnegie Library.** Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library

**LM.** Longmont Museum

**LPL.** Lafayette Public Library

**MROHP.** Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library

Information cited as from a conversation with Marjorie McIntosh on a stated date has been confirmed in writing and approved for use in this book by the authors of those statements.

All websites listed below were last accessed November 10-18, 2015.

<sup>1</sup> For entries with a BCLHP reference:

- Items labelled as FP are family photographs loaned by community members and digitized by the BCLHP. The photographers are unknown unless specified.
- Items labelled as LHS are photos loaned to the Longmont Hispanic Study in 1987-8 by a relative or descendent of the people shown. They were converted into slides by Oli Olivas Duncan for use in public presentations associated with the 1988 publication of *We, Too, Came to Stay: A History of the Longmont Hispanic Community*, which she edited. In 2014, the BCLHP was given permission to make digital copies of the slides, many of which showed unidentified people. The dates, locations, and photographers of these photos are unknown unless specified.

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