

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

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

**Chapter Four:
*Social Life, Entertainment, and Sports***

by

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Chapter 4

Social Life, Entertainment, and Sports

Sociability among Boulder County's Latinas/os is related to the previous chapters, as it commonly involved family or neighborhood gatherings and included food. Early in the century, social interactions were largely confined to people living within walking distance of one's own home. For many farm families, the ability to make lasting friendships was curtailed by movement to a new job and therefore new housing every year.¹ But as more households acquired a car or truck, their ability to travel to meet with friends or join other social or recreational activities increased. Owning a vehicle continued to be a matter of pride, not just an economic necessity, as witnessed by many family photos.² By the middle of the century, young people were beginning to interact more often with non-Latinas/os than in the past, including around forms of entertainment and sports. Closer contact with Anglos heightened the need for an ethnic self-definition that validated one's ability to function well within the larger community.

A. Social Life

Many Latinas/os enjoyed an active social life. Until around 1950 and to some extent thereafter, it was almost entirely informal, concentrated within families and in some cases groups of neighbors or friends. In those earlier decades, social interactions varied a great deal depending upon where people were living. Urban residents had the most ample opportunities. In Boulder's Water + Goss Streets neighborhood, Latino

¹ See Vol. I, Ch. 3A-B.

² See Vol. I, Illus. 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9, Illus. 2.4 above, "Three boys in matching plaid jackets," "Two men standing in front of a car," "Six children in front of car," "Two toddlers on the bumper of a car," and "Young couple beside car."

households, some of them related, got together regularly to celebrate important events or just to enjoy each other's company. Virginia Maestas, who was born in 1935 and moved to Boulder around 1948, described what gatherings in that neighborhood had been like for young people.³

It was kind of neat because there was no barrier between the young and the old. Most of our parents would be in the kitchen talking, eating, whatever. With the rest of the families, regardless of our ages, from young teenagers to the just over teenagers, all singing together and dancing together, laughing. Just having a good time. It was a real wholesome kind of entertainment.

For the Water + Goss Streets families, although many gatherings were associated with transition points in life or specifically religious events, a few other occasions called for a party too.⁴ The holidays described by Marcella Diaz, who grew up in her grandparents' household in the 1940s and 1950s, were Easter (with no Easter eggs, just a family dinner), Thanksgiving (another family dinner), and Christmas (a big family assembly and meal).⁵ "Christmas gifts were practically non-existent when we were children, though we did get a sock filled with mixed shelled nuts, an orange or apple, and one small gift that stuck out of the top of the sock. We had never received more, so we did not know enough to want more." In Virginia Madrigal Martinez's family, Easter was celebrated more vigorously in the late 1950s and 1960s. It was "a combination of egg hunts, lots of food, & lots of friends and relatives," plus homemade music.⁶ Members of Boulder's Tafoya family received beautifully wrapped Christmas gifts in 1956.⁷

Some activities occurred outdoors. Patrick Arroyo remembered the corn and wienie roasts they had in Lafayette, where his father would tell stories.⁸ They also played horseshoes, and he had informal boxing lessons. After his family moved to Boulder in 1944, he and some of his relatives went hiking around Flagstaff Mountain and the foothills, and his whole family had picnics at Chautauqua Park and went camping.⁹

³ Maestas, Virginia, interview, 1978, for this and below.

⁴ See Chs. 1B above and 5A below.

⁵ "Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography." For New Mexican traditions at Easter, Christmas, and New Year's, see Cardenas, Lou, interview, at end.

⁶ "Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies."

⁷ "Tafoya family Christmas."

⁸ Arroyo, Patrick, interview, 1989.

⁹ Ibid. The photo below was taken by a German immigrant photographer whom Patrick's



Illus. 4.1. The Arroyo family at Chautauqua Park, 1947

Albert Borrego, who first trained horses for the Pace Ranch in Longmont and later worked as a miner, was described by his daughter and granddaughter as

a great hunter and avid sportsman throughout his life. He passed on his hunting, fishing, and survival techniques, as well as his love of the outdoors and mountains, to his children and grandchildren during the many hunting, camping and fishing trips they took together. He loved to stream fish and hunted wild game up to the age of ninety-two.¹⁰

Juan Archuleta mixed business with pleasure by going fishing in the lakes and ponds around Boulder: during Lent his own family ate the fish, but normally he sold them to other people.¹¹

The situation was different for early agricultural workers and their families. They generally lived on farms at some distance from other

parents had befriended: "Arroyo family at Chautauqua Park (text)."

¹⁰ "Borrego, Albert and Elvinia ("Bea") Martinez, biography."

¹¹ "Archuleta family history," and see also "Man with large fish."

Latinas/os and had little time for socializing anyway. Roseann Chavez Ortega, born in 1942, lived as a child in the tenant house on Ralph Bixler's farm east of Boulder, where her father was employed. When asked in a later interview what her family did for entertainment or social life when she was a child, she said they did very little.¹² They did not have a television but listened to mystery programs and music on the radio. One of her mother's favorites was "Blue Heaven," which she sang as she worked around the house. Beyond that, they occasionally went to visit other families, mainly to the Garcias, who were only other Hispanics who lived close by. Migrant workers were even more isolated, finding it difficult to form ongoing friendships outside their own immediate families.

After the middle of the century, sociability increased among friends and members of extended families even if they did not live near each other. This change was due in part to more time off from work and improved communication and transportation. Hank Blazón, who grew up on his parents' farm in Mead, described their 4th of July tradition in the 1950s.

My dad used to have his brothers and sisters over, and we'd barbeque a pig . . . or a goat or a lamb or something. Then after my dad stopped, . . . we had it at my brother's who lives next door, and him and I used to roast a pig and we'd have people over and that probably went for ten years. We didn't do it last year but my niece has taken over, so she's starting the tradition to continue the barbeque on the Fourth of July. We've had up to 250 people here at one time.¹³

A few activities were carried out among wider circles of friends. Marta Moreno, who moved to Longmont in the mid-1970s, promoted some celebrations that had been common in El Paso, where she grew up, but were not regularly practiced here.¹⁴ She thought these events would help to pull the Latino community together. She encouraged *quinceañeras* ("coming of age" parties for 15-year-old girls) and *posadas* (where groups of people walk to the houses of their neighbors and friends during the nine evenings before Christmas, asking to be allowed in, as were Mary and Joseph; when the "innkeepers" welcome them, they enter and all pray and then eat together). Dolores Silva and her

¹² Ortega, Roseann Chavez, interview, 1986.

¹³ Blazón, William ("Hank"), interview, 2013.

¹⁴ Moreno, Marta Valenzuela, interview, 2013.

husband Manuel had a lively social life in Lafayette. When interviewed in 2013, Dolores said that when they were younger, their friends “would have steak dinner dances with a Mexican band. That was our favorite thing to go to. We went to a lot of weddings. A lot of birthdays. A lot of *quinceañeras*. A lot of anniversary parties – because everybody more or less knew each other. So we would all invite each other to everything.”¹⁵

Distinctively Mexican celebrations were rare in Boulder. Independence Day commemorated the beginning of Mexico’s war against Spain on September 16, 1810. The day was still remembered by Virginia Madrigal Martinez’s grandparents, who were 21 and 19 when they left Mexico and brought photos of the Independence festivities there, but they did not do anything to celebrate it in Boulder.¹⁶ Marcella Diaz never heard of commemorations for the 16th of September when she was growing up.¹⁷ The trans-national borderlands had evidently lost their meaning for those acculturated families: they did not share the strong expatriate Mexican nationalism found among some Latinas/os in California.¹⁸ In Longmont, however, where many Latinas/os had come more recently from Mexico, hundreds of Spanish-speaking people enjoyed a two-day fiesta in September, 1935 to celebrate Mexican Independence, including patriotic speeches, entertainment, dancing, and a street parade.¹⁹ The newspaper reported approvingly that “the entire fiesta was orderly and jovial.” In the mid-1970s, Susie Chacon, the owner of Señor Miguel’s Restaurant in Boulder, helped to create a Dieciséis Fiesta on a vacant lot.²⁰ But the turnout was disappointing, and it received no coverage in the press, so she was not sure it would become an annual tradition. A few Boulder families started celebrating Cinco de Mayo in the 1960s and 1970s, and there was somewhat greater enthusiasm for the event in Longmont, but prior to the late twentieth century, such fiestas did not assume the importance they had in parts of California.²¹

¹⁵ Silva, Dolores, interview, 2013.

¹⁶ “Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies.”

¹⁷ “Martinez, Juan and Josephine; Marcella Diaz, biography.”

¹⁸ Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!*, p. 5.

¹⁹ “Mexicans celebrate Independence Day.”

²⁰ Chacon, Susie, interview, 1977.

²¹ Hayes-Bautista, *El Cinco de Mayo*, pp. 177-190, and Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, pp. 92-97.



*Illus. 4.2. Four friends in Lafayette, 1930s
(Sally Salazar Martinez, Pearl Lopez, Alvia
Abeyta, and Maggie Manzanares)*



**Boulder Courthouse, 1940,
base of the WWI memorial
l to r: Arthur Archuleta, 16 yrs;
Victor Martinez, 16 yrs, friend;
Frank Archuleta, 14 yrs.**

*Illus. 4.3. Three friends in Boulder, 1940
(Arthur Archuleta, Victor Martinez,
and Frank Archuleta)*



Illus. 4.4. Group of boys in Longmont, beside car

B. Entertainment and Recreation

Latinas/os took part in organized entertainment only occasionally. Virginia Maestas said that in Boulder during the late 1940s and 1950s,

There was no place for the Chicanos, the Mexicanos, to get together, to have a good time, to have the cultural thing, music. We couldn't even get records in Boulder. If you wanted to buy a record and you were lucky, you might find one in Denver. There was one Mexican [radio] station that came into being around 1948-49.²²

To see a Mexican movie, they had to go to Denver or Fort Lupton.²³ Aside from that, there were school dances, but Virginia did not like them, because the style of dancing was so different and much less fun. Virginia's comments draw our attention to the existence of a local cultural network that connected Boulder County to the large Hispanic population in Denver, 30 miles to the south, and to residents of the small town of Fort Lupton, 10 miles to the east, a center of sugar beet production.

Young people therefore organized their own activities or just hung out with friends.²⁴ In most settings, those friends were usually Latinas/os, but in Boulder's Water + Goss Streets neighborhood, boys had more diverse social contacts. John Martinez was friends with an African American boy from that area in the later 1930s; by the 1950s, most of Abe Maestas' high school friends were Anglos, young people he had known since their years together at Lincoln Elementary and Casey Junior High.²⁵ Integrated housing patterns thus promoted multi-ethnic, multi-racial activities.

Latino youngsters enjoyed many kinds of informal recreation. Patrick Arroyo, who was a teenager in the 1940s, described where they spent time: the soda shop next to the Isis Theater, the Alba Dairy ice cream shop, and Jones' and Potter's drugstores.²⁶ He and his friends went to the roller rink and swam at the indoor pool at the Hygienic Ice Plant, where

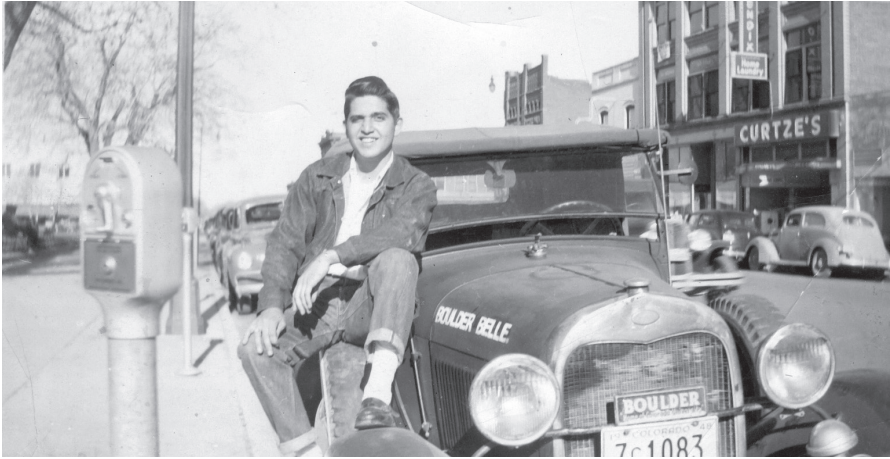
²² Maestas, Virginia, interview, 1978.

²³ Virginia Maestas, conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, Nov. 24, 2013.

²⁴ See also "Jennie Razo (Romero) and Alicia Sanchez (Sanchez)," "Becky Ortega and friends," "Tina Perez and other teens playing poker," and "Four Suazo sisters as young women."

²⁵ Illus. 4.6 below; Maestas, Virginia, interview, 1978.

²⁶ Arroyo, Patrick, interview, 1989. He also recalled having to appear before Judge Bunzel, noted for his toughness, when a game of Ditch 'Em, an elaborate form of hide and seek, got a little out of hand!



Illus. 4.5. Patrick Arroyo and the "Boulder Belle," 1946

Patrick worked during high school. When he got older, he loved to drive his friends around in the family's 1929 Ford Model-A Roadster Ragtop. The Maestas children too went to the Hygienic Swimming Pool, located at 21st and Spruce, which cost only 10 cents; after swimming they would go across the street to the A & W place to get root beer and popcorn.²⁷ If Boulder Creek froze over in the winter, Abe and Bob Maestas played ice hockey, "using a tree branch for their stick and a smashed can for the puck." In the summer they fished in the creek and once went swimming in Baseline Lake. Lafayette offered more specifically Latino activities. When Eleanor Montour was in high school around 1960, she and her friends—most of whom had left school to start working—went "out in the community, going to dances, and listening to Mexican bands playing . . . and having that camaraderie and feeling of belonging."²⁸

Few Latinas/os went regularly to the movies before the 1960s, in part because they were too expensive but also because the films were almost exclusively in English and local theaters were segregated. John Martinez described what happened when he went to the movies as a teen in the 1930s with an African American friend.²⁹ Longmont's movie theatre required Latinas/os to sit at the back or in the balcony. Alex Gonzales said that as soon as a Latino walked into a movie, the usher would tell

²⁷ "Maestas, Pedro (Roy), Ruby, and Abe, biography" for this and below. The A & W Root beer place is mentioned also in "Boulder, film of places of historical importance."

²⁸ Montour, Eleanor, interview, 2013.

²⁹ See also Martinez, Emma Gomez, interview, 2013.

SEGREGATION 1936

Emmett, the Geofos kid and I had gone to the movies downtown



(Boulder). We had just sat down when an usher came up and told Emmett that Negroes couldn't sit on the main floor. He would have to sit in the balcony. We went with Emmett to watch the movie from the balcony. All of us were about twelve when this happened. I didn't realize until later that if I, as a Mexican American, had wanted to see a movie in Longmont; I would have had to sit in the balcony. The number of seats available to Mexicans was limited and Mexicans had to sit together in one area of the balcony.

Illus. 4.6. "Segregation in Boulder, 1936," by John Martinez

him which area to sit in.³⁰ Virginia Maestas remembered going to a movie in Longmont in 1950, when seating was still segregated.³¹

Because Latinas/os were excluded from some restaurants and bars until the mid-1950s, especially in Longmont and Louisville, men had to find other places to socialize.³² Here as in other communities, pool halls were a place where Latinos could congregate. On the weekends after he finished hauling trash, Roy Maestas of Boulder would walk over to Bill's Billiards to have a drink and spend time with his friends, some of whom were Anglos.³³ Hank Blazón's father ran a pool hall in an upstairs room of the Dickens Opera House on Main Street in Longmont during the 1930s and early 1940s.³⁴ Although he was described in the 1936 *City Directory* as operating a billiards parlor, a more dignified term, he was nevertheless harassed by the police. In the 1940 U.S. Census, Daniel Martinez was listed as the manager of a pool hall in Lafayette. It served such a mixed clientele of miners that it was known locally as "the United Nations."³⁵ David Toledo, who worked mainly as a miner but also

³⁰ Gonzales, Alex, interview, c. 1987. Mexicans were likewise required to sit in separate sections of movie theaters in Corona, CA until after WW II (Alamilla, *Making Lemonade*, pp. 86-7).

³¹ Conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, Nov. 24, 2013. The movie she saw was Mexican, which was unusual.

³² Vol. I, Chs. 4B and 5C.

³³ "Maestas, Pedro (Roy), Ruby, and Abe, biography."

³⁴ Blazón, William ("Hank"), interview, 2013, and "Longmont, film of places of historical importance."

³⁵ Leigh Campbell-Hale, conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, March 25, 2013.

cut hair, opened a barbershop with pool tables in Frederick.³⁶ He sold sandwiches and coffee, and people played pool for money.

Music was an important element of Latino sociability and of a continued cultural identity. In Boulder during the 1930s and 1940s, E. E. Bernal “played the violin and guitar and would sing at family gatherings. Spontaneous dancing in the living room would occur when he began to play and sing a *corrido* or ballad in Spanish.”³⁷ Virginia Madrigal Martinez said that at her family’s Easter parties, “my grandfather would get out his mandolin, my dad, his guitar or bass, my uncle John, his violin, uncle Tony, his guitar, & uncle Frank would play his drums. And they would play all day long with aunts Mary Lou and Julie singing along.”³⁸ Roy Maestas played the guitar and sang with family and friends; sometimes he brought other instrumentalists home to join the music, with his wife at the piano and his daughters singing.³⁹ Most of Roy’s children also learned to play, some at school and others through private lessons. Abe played guitar, Phyllis, Alice, and Barbara played the violin, Martha played accordion, and Vivian played piano. Their parents’ willingness to pay for music lessons and have them take part in school music suggests that they wanted the children to be comfortable with Anglo culture as well as maintaining Latino patterns.⁴⁰

Some musicians performed for pay. Virginia Madrigal Martinez’s grandfather and his sons had a band that travelled to other towns on the weekends to play for social events.⁴¹ Mary Gonzales and her brother Alfonso used to sing—in Spanish—at weddings, baptisms, and other occasions in the 1950s.⁴² Dolores Silva, who moved to Lafayette in the 1950s, sang at many events across the following decades, including weddings, funerals, *quinceañeras*, and anniversary parties.⁴³ People especially wanted her to sing familiar Spanish songs. As more bands with vocalists formed in the 1960s and 1970s, often to play at dances, some young Latinas joined Latinos in taking part.⁴⁴

³⁶ Toledo, David, interview, c. 1978.

³⁷ “Bernal, E. E. and Eva, biography and photo.”

³⁸ “Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies.” See also “Juan Francisco Archuleta with guitar.”

³⁹ “Maestas, Pedro (Roy), Ruby, and Abe, biography” for this and below.

⁴⁰ See Vol. I, Ch. 5C for identity formation among these young people.

⁴¹ “Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies.”

⁴² Tafoya, Mary Gonzales, interview, 2009.

⁴³ Silva, Dolores, interview, 2013.

⁴⁴ “Two young men and a young woman playing guitars” and “Man playing guitar and woman playing accordion.”



Illus. 4.7. Ben Rodriguez at radio station KLMO, Longmont, 1952

Many people loved “Spanish” or “Mexican” music. Ben Rodriguez, who later became the first Latino member of Longmont’s City Council, hosted a popular Spanish-language radio program in the 1950s that played records of favorite music. Secundino Herrera, born in northern New Mexico but later a Longmont resident, said in 1987 that “Spanish-Mexican music is the most beautiful there is, and so is the culture.”⁴⁵ Secundino and others in Longmont who enjoyed Spanish music were fortunate, for by around 1970, they were able to buy records at Casa Medina. Miguel Medina, a Puerto Rican who came to Colorado from Chicago, started with just a few LP records sent to him by a friend, but gradually he expanded his collection and his customers.⁴⁶ At least a few Latinas/os enjoyed classical European music as well. Ted Archuleta grew up in Longmont, graduated from high school in 1938, was a bomber pilot in World War II, and later obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees before becoming Dean of Business Services at a community college.⁴⁷ Even as a young person, Ted liked to listen to operas on the radio.

Dancing was popular among people of all ages.⁴⁸ When E. E. Bernal

⁴⁵ Herrera, Secundino, interview, c. 1987.

⁴⁶ Medina, Miguel, interview, 2013.

⁴⁷ “Archuleta, Ted, eulogy.”

⁴⁸ See, e.g., “Dancing at a party” and “People dancing at a party.”



Illus. 4.8. [Reina and Felix Gallegos dancing](#)

and his wife were working on beet farms around the county in the 1920s and early 1930s, they sometimes went dancing at a friend's house, joined by his parents and sister.⁴⁹ In Boulder, Juan and Clofes Archuleta danced “the silk scarf waltz” and polkas on family occasions.⁵⁰ A few dances were held in public places in the 1950s. John Chavez organized dances at the Elks’ Club in Boulder on Saturdays, attended mainly by Latinas/os; Sacred Heart Church sometimes hosted dances, occasionally even hiring Latino musicians to play.⁵¹

Renting a space for private dances was another option. Roy Maestas said that although Boulder Latinas/os danced mainly in people’s homes, once in a while someone would rent an upstairs hall on Pearl Street and hire a band.⁵² Roy’s daughter-in-law agreed. On special occasions, the teenagers—all of whom were working even if they were still in school—would get together and rent the W-O-W [or IOOF] Hall, upstairs on the corner of 11th and Pearl, for a fee of \$5 or \$6.⁵³ “For a particular birthday, or particular time of the year, we’d all pitch in and have the makings for

⁴⁹ Bernal, Mr. and Mrs. Emerenciano, interview, 1977.

⁵⁰ “Archuleta family history.”

⁵¹ Maestas, Roy, interview, 1978; Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

⁵² Maestas, Roy, interview, 1978, and “Maestas, Pedro (Roy), Ruby, and Abe, biography.”

⁵³ Maestas, Virginia, interview, 1978.

a party. Bake our own cake, we'd make our own sandwiches, we'd have Kool-Aid. . . . So we teenagers (and we wouldn't exclude our parents, they were always welcome) . . . would have a really super good time."

Organized dances for Latinas/os were more common in Longmont. During the 1920s and 1930s, the *colonia* of minimal housing set up by the Great Western Sugar Company offered sociability for people who worked in the beet fields or the sugar factory, as well as for other Latinas/os living nearby. Benjamin and Adela Vigil lived across from the *colonia*. As a younger relative later recalled, "*La colonia* functioned as a social center for dances and other festivities for the local Hispanic community. When there were dances, young mothers took their children to Dela's house. There the mothers took turns tending the children so that they could also take turns enjoying the dance."⁵⁴ Patrick Arroyo, who spent his childhood in Lafayette and Boulder, remembered going to "jitney dances" in Longmont on Friday nights in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁵⁵ Latinas/os would come from places all around, and he was introduced to his future wife there. Virginia Maestas likewise commented that dances in Longmont were where young people got to know Latinas/os from outside their own towns.⁵⁶ Some of those dances were held in the big hall above the Dickens Opera House on Main Street.

Less was said about Latino dances after around 1960. When Jessie Velez Lehmann moved to Boulder in 1962, she loved to dance but found she had to travel elsewhere to do so, as there were no public dances for Latinas/os in Boulder.⁵⁷ Candace Arroyo, a university student who was exploring what it meant to be a Chicana, was part of a *baile folklórico* dance group in 1977.⁵⁸ In the early twenty-first century, traditional dancing remained popular among older women. Mary Gonzales Tafoya, aged 74 in 2009, was part of a senior *folklórico* group called *Bailes de Mi Terra* that practiced twice each week for their performances at schools, senior centers, and other settings, dressed in elaborate costumes.⁵⁹ She was joined in that dance company by semi-retired Sister Rosa Suazo, also in her 70s.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ "Cortez, Jose Hilario ("J. H.") and Maria Sabina, biography."

⁵⁵ Arroyo, Patrick, interview, 1989. At a jitney dance, you paid a small amount for entry and then a separate amount for each dance you wanted to join.

⁵⁶ Maestas, Virginia, interview, 2013. For below, see "Longmont, film of places of historical importance."

⁵⁷ Lehmann, Jessie Velez, interview, 1978.

⁵⁸ Arroyo, Candace, interview, 1977.

⁵⁹ Tafoya, Mary Gonzales, interview, 2009.

⁶⁰ "Sister Rosa Suazo (center) in Senior Folklorico Dance Group," and see Ch. 5A below.

A few short-lived Latino clubs provided social activities for some urban Latinas/os. Romolo Martinez was one of the organizers of the Spanish-American Club in Longmont. “The Club sponsored some fiestas in the ‘30s that were greatly enjoyed by citizens and visitors. Then at one fiesta some feisty young men from out of town got in a fight with the police and the celebrations were discontinued.”⁶¹ Virginia Madrigal Martinez’s grandfather was president of his club in Boulder.⁶² She said that whenever people needed help with problems, he would take them to Denver to the Mexican Consulate to get advice, but she did not describe what else the club did.

We have already seen the importance of veterans’ organizations for former soldiers and their families, but the VFW played a wider role by renting out its facilities for private events.⁶³ When Dolores Silva was asked in 2013 where social events for Latinas/os in Lafayette had previously occurred, she responded:

Most everything would take place there at the VFW. That’s where Felicia had her *quinceañera*, and Chuck and Mandy were married there. They had steak dinner dances there. They had bingo there. Everything, everything you could think of—any kind of social thing—they had. You wanted to make money for a football team or a baseball team, they had everything done there at the VFW. The VFW was very, very good for all of us in Lafayette.⁶⁴

C. Sports

Until around 1940, opportunities for participation in organized team sports were limited. Children and young people played informally with their friends and neighbors. Patrick Arroyo, born in 1930, remembered playing soccer and baseball first in Lafayette and then in Boulder after his family moved there in 1944.⁶⁵ Phil Hernandez and Tom Abila both mentioned a vacant lot—at the southwest corner of Water Street and 19th in Boulder—that was always filled with kids playing pick-up games

⁶¹ *They Came to Stay*, p. 159. He was probably referring to an outdoor event called “Heroes of Mexico” held in Roosevelt Park in May, 1937, which ended in a fight; the police chief was injured when he tried to break it up (“Police chief attacked at Mexican celebration”). For the Spanish-American Club, see Vol. I, Ch. 5C.

⁶² “Madrigal family of Boulder, biographies.”

⁶³ See Vol. I, Ch. 5B for the G.I. Forum and the VFW.

⁶⁴ Silva, Dolores, interview, 2013.

⁶⁵ Arroyo, Patrick, interview, 1989.

of baseball or football.⁶⁶ The six Vigil children, who were living on the Lohr farm east of Boulder around 1950, used to play “Work-Up” baseball in the evenings, sometimes joined by their dad; when their friends the Griegos came for a visit, everyone played.⁶⁷

In the 1940s, Latino young people—girls as well as boys—began to participate in sports at school, increasing their interactions with Anglo peers in non-academic settings. Doris Gonzales, born in 1928, recalled that she played field hockey, baseball, soccer, volleyball, and did track at school in Boulder—“everything they had then.”⁶⁸ Tom Abila moved to Boulder in 1947, as he was entering Casey Junior High. Although he did not go on to senior high school, “I played baseball, I was on the wrestling team, started to play football but I couldn’t do that because I was too light. I went out for track. I’ve always been athletic minded ever since I was young, and I’ve always competed. . . . That’s where I really made my goal, in athletics.”⁶⁹ Jim Hutchison, a scoutmaster in Lafayette for 30 years starting in 1955, encountered a similar attitude. Jim said that some of his Latino scouts were very smart but thought there was no future for them academically; athletics were the only way they could get ahead.⁷⁰

Latino children involved in school sports were not always treated equally in those early years. Emma Gomez Martinez, who grew up in Erie, described many years later a painful episode in the mid-1940s:

In 11th grade, I played volleyball. Our team won the championship. Lo and behold, there weren’t enough letters for the girls, so mine was given to another girl. (I was the only Mexican on the team). My daughter wrote to Erie High School in 2012 and the principal sent me my overdue letter. What a sad experience for a 16-year-old girl. I had to beg my dad to let me play the following year.⁷¹

By the 1960s and 1970s, school sports were more genuinely integrated. In 1962, James Ortega of Boulder High School was the State Class A Wrestling Champion as well as a standout in football and an honors student; he planned to enter the University of Colorado that fall.⁷² Gilbert Espinoza was a wrestling champion at Boulder High

⁶⁶ “Boulder, film of places of historical importance” and Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

⁶⁷ Vigil, Jennie, and others, interview, 2001.

⁶⁸ Gonzales, Doris, interview, 2013.

⁶⁹ Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

⁷⁰ Conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, Jan. 7, 2014.

⁷¹ “Martinez, Emma Gomez, letter to her children.”

⁷² “Latino student graduates High School, 1962” and see “Latino students graduate High School, 1964, Pt. 2.”



Illus. 4.9. Baseball team organized by St. John's Church, Longmont, 1946?

in 1964 and 1965; after serving in Vietnam, he received a wrestling scholarship to the University of Colorado.⁷³ Larry Rosales was one of Lafayette High School's three state wrestling champions in 1965.⁷⁴ Larry Zaragoza set a state record in track for Lafayette in 1967 and became a national champion in the 600-meter dash while at Adams State College in Alamosa; he then coached high school sports for 30 years.

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, some Latinos in eastern Boulder County played on competitive baseball teams. Most teams were segregated in those decades, with Latinos and African Americans excluded, so the "Sugar Beet League" was formed.⁷⁵ Its member teams were located in the towns of northeastern Colorado where many Latino

⁷³ "Gilbert Espinoza, State Champion, Wrestling Meet," "Gilbert Espinoza, State Wrestling Champion," "Gilbert Espinoza in Viet Nam," "Gilbert Espinoza's military service," and "Gilbert Espinoza, wrestler at University of Colorado."

⁷⁴ "Rosales, Larry and Linda, biography." The information below is from Phil Hernandez, email to Marjorie McIntosh, Jan. 13, 2015.

⁷⁵ "Sugar Beet Baseball Leagues." In this area, however, segregated baseball teams do not appear to have served as settings for emerging political activism as was the case in Corona, CA (Alamilla, *Making Lemonade*, pp. 128-129).

farm workers had settled, living often in *colonias*. The leading team in the region during the 1940s and 1950s was the Greeley Greys, whose members were heroes to the local Latino community.⁷⁶ Longmont was not part of the Sugar Beet League, but it had its own Latino teams, one of which was sponsored by St. John's Catholic Church and coached by priests. Later Casa Medina, the music store, and Joe Esquibel, pharmacy owner, sponsored teams.⁷⁷

Segregation in baseball gradually broke down. Oli Duncan attributed the change to the increasing number of Latinas/os who went to high school in the later 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁸ When the coaches realized what good baseball players some of these boys were, they admitted them onto school teams. Once Anglos had become accustomed to integrated teams at school, they were more willing to let Latinos join adult leagues.

Baseball was popular as a spectator sport too. For some people, this interest began at an early age. Tom Abila talked about the influence of his grandfather, Abel Diagos, a former schoolteacher in Walsenburg who had moved to Boulder to be near his younger relatives.⁷⁹ One of the reasons Tom felt close to his granddad was that "he was a sports fan, especially baseball. He used to love his baseball. That's how come I got interested in sports, through him. He used to . . . explain it to me. The World Series and all that stuff. And that's where I started picking up sports, got enthused about sports."

At the level of professional athletics, Latinos in the Southwest were likely to participate only in boxing and baseball. John Ortega, born in 1895 and raised in Pueblo, became a prizefighter.⁸⁰ Competing under the name of "Johnny Kid Mex," he held the title of light-weight champion of the Rocky Mountain States for seven years during the late 1910s and early 1920s. But over time he did less boxing, taking work in the coal mines instead. In 1926, he, his wife Mary, and their five children moved to Lafayette, with no further mention of fighting. In the Longmont *City Directory* for 1936, Joseph M. Gomez's occupation is given as prize fighter.⁸¹ He lived in a household headed by his parents, Andros and Minnie Gomez, at 1044 Bross Street, together with three other young male Gomezes who were beet workers. By 1940, however, Joseph was no

⁷⁶ Lopez and Lopez, *White Gold Laborers*, pp. 227-240.

⁷⁷ "Casa Medina's softball team" and "Joe Esquibel in 1989."

⁷⁸ Conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, April 12, 2013.

⁷⁹ Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

⁸⁰ "Ortega, John, family of, biography" for this paragraph.

⁸¹ "Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1936."



Illus. 4.10. John Ortega as boxer "Kid Mex" in 1919

longer living in Longmont, and we do not know what his later history was.

Professional baseball players were likewise rarely mentioned. Dolores Silva said that when her mother came to Denver from Taos, New Mexico as a young woman in the 1920s, she met Dolores's father, a professional baseball player. After he stopped playing, he became a coal miner.⁸² Miguel Medina had a different connection with the pros near the end of the century. In 1991 he met someone who played for the Denver Zephyrs, a minor league team, and through him got to know the Spanish-speaking players.⁸³ When the men moved into the major league, Miguel became the translator for Latinos like Vinny Castilla, Armando Renoso, and Andres Galarraga when they were interviewed or needed something in writing. He also worked with young players who were homesick and unhappy, encouraging them to stick with it: "This could be your future, and you got to, you have to do it . . . for you and for your family."

Social life and entertainment among Boulder County's Latinas/os moved from being almost entirely home- or neighborhood-based early

⁸² Silva, Dolores, interview, 2013.

⁸³ Medina, Miguel, interview, 2013.

in the century to becoming part of somewhat wider cultural circles. Music and dancing were key ingredients of social occasions, in whatever setting, but until the later 1950s and 1960s Latinas/os generally had to take seats in less desirable sections of movie theaters and were excluded from many bars and restaurants. School sports were gradually integrated, but at a professional level, Latinos were confined to boxing or segregated baseball teams until the second half of the century. Limited participation in Anglo-dominated cultural and athletic events contributed to the ongoing role of the family as a focus of Latino social life.

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.

- 4.1. The Arroyo family at Chautauqua Park, 1947. Clint Otis Dunn, photographer. Courtesy of Linda Arroyo-Holmstrom. [BCLHP-FP-121](#) (description in FP-122).
- 4.2. Four friends in Lafayette, 1930s (Sally Salazar Martinez, Pearl Lopez, Alvia Abeyta, and Maggie Manzanares). Courtesy of Sharon Stetson. [BCLHP-FP-190](#).
- 4.3. Three friends in Boulder, 1940 (Arthur Archuleta, Victor Martinez, and Frank Archuleta). Courtesy of Phil Hernandez. [BCLHP-FP-001](#).
- 4.4. Group of boys in Longmont, beside car. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-140](#).
- 4.5. Patrick Arroyo and the “Boulder Belle,” 1946. Courtesy of Linda Arroyo-Holmstrom. [BCLHP-FP-118](#).
- 4.6. “Segregation in Boulder, 1936,” by John Martinez. Courtesy of Tom Martinez. [BCLHP-MKM-413](#).
- 4.7. Ben Rodriguez at radio station KLMO, Longmont, 1952. Courtesy of Longmont Museum. LM, 1995.007.002. <http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/5AC8E5E9-D096-47BE-BB1B-522951866033>.
- 4.8. Reina and Felix Gallegos dancing. Courtesy of El Comité de Longmont. [BCLHP-LHS-280](#).
- 4.9. Baseball team organized by St. John’s Church, Longmont, 1946? Courtesy of Longmont Museum. LM, 1995.012.007. <http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/CC69E3FF-A0D1-41A6-AA07-470660325100>.
- 4.10. John Ortega as boxer “Kid Mex” in 1919. In *Lafayette, Colorado*, F332. With permission from James Hutchison. [BCLHP-MKM-782](#).

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.¹ These provide the ID number for items accessible on the Boulder County Latino History website, 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.

¹ 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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