

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

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

Introduction

by

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, people from Spanish-speaking backgrounds have played essential roles in Boulder County, Colorado. The first volume in this set offers a chronological and thematic history of local Latinas/os, tracing the contributions they made to this region between 1900 and 1980.¹ Its introductory chapter lays out some background material that applies to this book as well.² It summarizes the intellectual context provided by other historical work, discusses ethnic identity and the terms that have been used over time to describe Latinas/os, and gives a brief overview of relevant nineteenth-century history. The chapter also explains how people are designated in this study and that we use gender-inclusive terms to make clear the centrality of women.

The present volume explores the daily lives of Latinas/os. It looks at their families, homes and neighborhoods, social and cultural interactions, religious patterns, and education across the span from 1900 to 1980. It is not a formal or complete sociological analysis but rather a description based on how local Latinas/os talked and wrote about their own experiences and those of their parents and grandparents. Their narratives are enriched by photos preserved within families. Because most of this evidence was provided by members of the community, local people are themselves the producers of historical knowledge, though the book was written by an academic historian. The book draws attention also to legacies, to the ways in which people from Spanish-speaking backgrounds developed attitudes and traditions that continue

¹ McIntosh, *Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado, 1900-1980*, Vol. I, *History and Contributions* [cited hereafter as Vol. I]. The same indexing terms are used in both volumes, to make searching easier.

² Vol. I, Ch. 1. That book also includes a Foreword by Prof. Arturo Aldama of the Department of Ethnic Studies, University of Colorado at Boulder, the Author's Preface, and Acknowledgments.

in Boulder County today among many Latinas/os and in some cases the wider community too.

Like the first book, this one focuses on three towns within Boulder County that had very different features. Longmont was almost entirely dependent upon commercial agriculture and food processing, while coal mining provided the economic basis for the smaller community of Lafayette. Boulder, the county seat, was a commercial center and home to the University of Colorado. That diversity helps to make the present study comparable to other communities in the American Southwest.

Both of these studies rely upon the excellent collection of primary sources gathered by the Boulder County Latino History Project [BCLHP] in 2013-14.³ The 1,600 items include rich personal materials: 100 oral history interviews, family biographies, videos, and hundreds of family photos. Those sources are supplemented by newspaper articles and quantified information about immigration, Latino students in the local schools, and occupations and employers. Virtually all of the primary materials cited in these two volumes are available online.⁴ Because a URL is provided for nearly every reference in the printed format, and references in the online versions of the books are live-linked to their sources, anyone who has access to the Web can view the original evidence, without going to a research library or traveling to archives. The study is therefore a perfect educational tool for K-12 and college teachers, enabling students to see the raw material from which historical work is produced.⁵

This book also introduces the BCLHP's remarkable interactive, computer-based maps, one for each of the three towns in every decade between 1926 and 1975.⁶ The maps display the location of households headed by people with Latino surnames, using a different color for students. If a viewer clicks on one of the marked households, a window opens with the names of the adult residents, their street address, and for some, their occupations and employers. These unique maps allow us to

³ For these sources and how they were assembled, see Vol. I, Ch. 1B.

⁴ Most are on the BCLHP's website (bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu), while others are on those of museums or libraries.

⁵ The BCLHP's website has a special section for educators, containing Primary Source Sets, Lesson Plans, short clips from interviews and films, and other instructional materials: teachbocolatinohistory.colorado.edu.

⁶ They can be accessed at bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu, under "Interactive City Maps."

study changes in housing patterns and neighborhoods over time.

Although this set is a local study, it sheds light on broader topics important to historians, sociologists, Chican@/Ethnic Studies specialists, and others who focus on the Southwest. Among them are issues of migration, labor conditions, racism and discrimination, the impact of war and veterans, and civil rights activity. The books also explore four interpretive questions: (1) What were the roles, experiences, and contributions of women? (2) How did people interact within families, looking especially at relations between men and women and between generations? (3) To what extent did Boulder County share patterns with communities that lay closer to the heart of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands or were major cities with large Latino populations; and to what extent was it influenced by a local network that included Denver? (4) How did local Latinas/os define themselves, creating an ethnic identity?

The chapters below begin with examination of the settings in which many aspects of Latinas/os' lives took place: their families, including key stages in the course of life; and their houses and neighborhoods. Chapter 3 discusses food, health, and medicine, while Chapter 4 describes social life, entertainment, and sports. Religious activities are next, followed by the education of Latino children. In these accounts, some voices are heard more frequently than others, because they present common patterns with special clarity. Many of the illustrations are old family snapshots, so their photographic quality is not always high, but they provide important visual information. An epilogue jumps 30 years forward to relate the experiences of ten young Latinas/os who worked as interns with the BCLHP in summer, 2013. As they talk about their own lives, we hear both continuities and contrasts with the lives of Boulder County's Latinas/os prior to 1980, and we gain hope for the future. The book ends by highlighting the legacies left by earlier Latinas/os to people today.