

# *The Latino Impress in Oklahoma City*



*By Jeffrey M. Widener\**

On April 22 thousands of homesteaders participated in the Land Run of 1889 in Oklahoma Territory. They came by foot, train, and wagon to stake their claims. Oklahoma City, a stopgap city, formed overnight and in a few years matured to become the state capital in 1910. Its location was a crossroads where members of various cultural groups assembled. Some of these people settled permanently while others continued moving. The development of commerce at this urban hub, including at first the construction of four railroad lines and later three interstates, attracted immigrants from throughout the world, including those from Latin America. Latinos were one of the early cultural groups to begin settling Oklahoma, specifically in Oklahoma City; however, the city did not have a long-

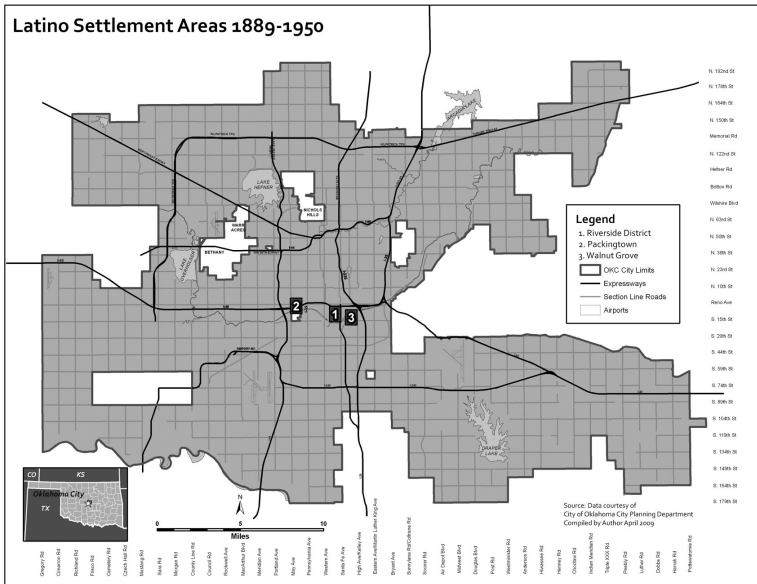
standing status as a Latino destination such as Chicago, New York City, or Los Angeles. From the 1890s to the 1980s the number of Latinos, especially of Mexicans, in Oklahoma City remained fairly steady, but in recent years their numbers increased significantly, prompting this study.

Oklahoma City's Latino migrants came from the nineteen Latin American Spanish-speaking countries, especially Mexico, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and Portuguese-speaking Brazil. An after-effect of Latino settlement was the modification of the urban landscape as Latinos established their own traditions in Oklahoma City. This alteration of the landscape not only shaped a place for them but also signified an inveterate cultural change that indicated they had settled permanently. The combination of their resolute perseverance in the city and the contributions of several dynamic Latin American leaders facilitated the process of Latinization—the impress of typically Latino cultural attributes on various aspects of a non-Latino society—that continues today in Oklahoma City.

In 1910 Oklahoma City had a population of 64,205 residents. Of that number 379 were of Mexican descent. The majority of those Hispanics worked for railroads—the Santa Fe, the Frisco, the Katy, and the Chicago Rock Island. By 1920 the state's Latino population doubled, and Oklahoma City's population, totaling 91,295 by then, reflected that pattern at 788. The escalation of Latino population during the early part of the twentieth century even led the Mexican government to open a consulate in Oklahoma City to administer labor issues and to regulate the number of Mexican immigrants to avoid having a labor surplus in Oklahoma City and throughout the state. Growth continued until the 1930s. When the Great Depression (1929-1939) and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s devastated Oklahoma's economy, Latinos, just like many Anglos in the state, searched for refuge elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

In 1930, as an early sign of hard times, the decennial census showed only a small increase of Hispanics in Oklahoma. The largest concentration was within Oklahoma City's 185,389 inhabitants where the Latino population rose to 988. Throughout the Great Depression many Latinos in Oklahoma City continued to work on section gangs for the railroad or in the various meatpacking facilities in the city's Packingtown. Some Latinos adversely affected by the economy lived in community camps created by city officials to aid destitute civilians hit hardest by the economic downturn. The 1940 decennial census showed that the state's Latino population had decreased. Oklahoma City's Latinos declined to approximately 342 of

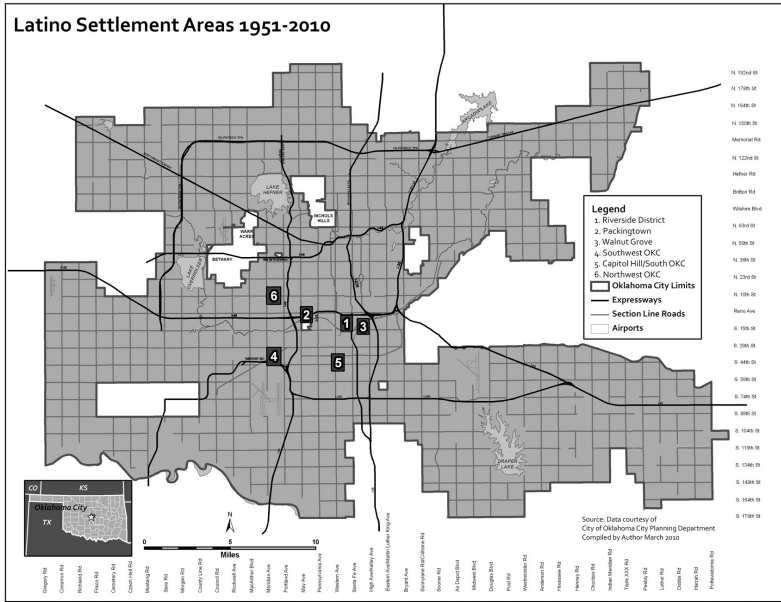
# THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



*Initially, Latinos who migrated to Oklahoma City settled in three locations: the Riverside District, Packingtown, and Walnut Grove (map courtesy of the author).*

its 204,424 residents, reflecting the same two-thirds drop the rest of the United States experienced. When the Hispanic migration increased overall in the United States in the late 1950s and into the 1960s and continued with a notable acceleration in the 1970s, a parallel pattern of growth occurred in Oklahoma and in Oklahoma City.<sup>2</sup>

Latinos sought to settle in Oklahoma in the 1900s for the same two reasons they went to other parts of the United States at the time: to take advantage of the economic opportunities and to escape negative situations in their mother countries. Many chose to work on railroad gangs, in coal mines, in cotton fields, and on farms and ranches throughout the state, willing to perform work that few Americans wanted to do. Most Latinos in Oklahoma City initially resided near their places of work. The Riverside District, located north of the North Canadian River, was one major Latino neighborhood. Another heavily Hispanic-populated district was Packingtown. George Ochoa, owner of the restaurant *Las Carnitas*,



*After the Urban Renewal Authority threatened to raze the Riverside District, Latinos scattered throughout the city creating three new Latinized areas (map courtesy of the author).*

recalled that by 1955 a large Latino community lived from Southwest Second Street to Southwest Fifteenth Street with very few Latinos elsewhere. They settled in these two sections of Oklahoma City initially because of employment opportunities, and they stayed in those areas for various reasons—but particularly because of the social networks and the propinquity to Little Flower Church.<sup>3</sup>

Hispanics left their impress on the Riverside District over the last century because of their shared workplaces and their common use of the Spanish language. During the early 1900s most Riverside settlers relocated from the small coal mining towns of southeastern Oklahoma or railroad towns in the southwestern section of the state. Some migrants came directly from Latin America throughout the 1900s, generally en route to other destinations such as Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. However, immigrants who stopped in Oklahoma usually found that jobs were procurable in a region where immigration officers were, according to an editor for the *Daily Oklahoman* in 1975, “not too active.” Some of the newcomers

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

who reached Oklahoma City learned about the Riverside District by word of mouth from friends or relatives; others simply looked for those unwanted jobs and then easily found the Latino community. The homes in this neighborhood were, and still are, cheap. In the 1960s when immigration rates began to rise significantly, the majority of the homes in this vicinity sold for approximately \$15,000 each. According to the Oklahoma County assessor's website, a typical house in the same neighborhood sold for \$20,500 in 2008.<sup>4</sup>

From the early 1900s to the 1980s the community stayed relatively confined because the immigrants knew being north of the railroad tracks after dark was dangerous. Likewise, few other Oklahoma Citians ventured around this part of town, enhancing the region's segregation. In fact, even the city of Oklahoma City ignored the Riverside region until the Urban Renewal Authority decided it wanted to bulldoze much of the neighborhood and redevelop it in the 1960s. This action scared many of the Hispanics out of the Riverside District and into locations further north, south, and west, resulting in a smattering of Latinos across Oklahoma City. Moreover, few non-Hispanic residents knew about the rapidly increasing Hispanic population that resided in two heavily populated locations of their hometown. For example, when Oklahoma City Mayor Patience Latting (1971-83) came into office, she did not even know about a Mexican community in Oklahoma City until a group of Mexican Americans complained to her about not being able to participate in the Saturday evening dances at the Civic Center Music Hall.<sup>5</sup>

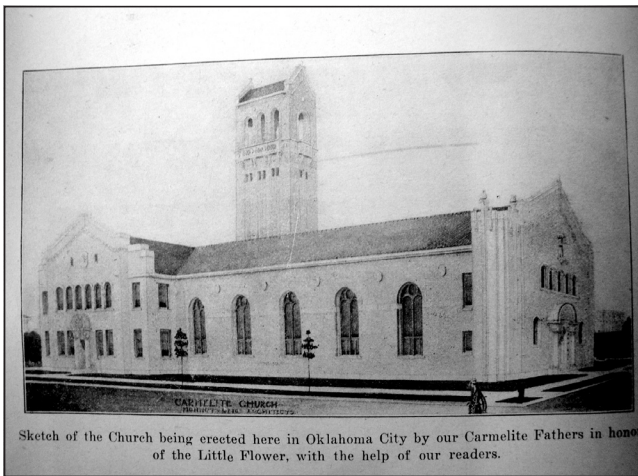
Over time another large Latino community formed in Packingtown, better known today as the Historic Stockyards City. In the 1910s Packingtown was a new locale replete with employment opportunities. During the early to mid-1900s this area housed numerous meat-processing plants, including an Armour packinghouse, several leather shops, and an important U.S. cattle-trading feedlot, which proffered a plethora of jobs and attracted a diverse clientele. Today the area still has a few leather shops, the stockyards, the famous Cattlemen's Steakhouse, which opened in 1910 as Cattlemen's Café, but no packing plants. Packingtown was in close proximity to the Riverside District and catered to both immigrants and the "American Spanish."<sup>6</sup>

Another example of an early to mid-1900s Latino neighborhood in Oklahoma City was Walnut Grove, located near the warehouse district on the north and south banks of the North Canadian River (Oklahoma River) and just to the east of the Riverside District.

## LATINO IMPRESS

Although better known for its large African American population, the location was also home to a number of Latinos. Walnut Grove was in close proximity to a variety of mills and warehouses and to the railroad tracks. During the 1920s and 1930s the region was an important part of the Oklahoma City Oilfield. In general, Latinos who settled in southwest Oklahoma City stayed there until they reached a secure level of income. Over the last few decades the Walnut Grove vicinity and the other southern Oklahoma City neighborhoods have been subject to gentrification due to the rerouting of the North Canadian River, the realignment of Interstate 40, and the implementation of the Core to Shore plan by the city of Oklahoma City.<sup>7</sup>

The second reason why Latinos wanted to stay in these neighborhoods was the founding of Little Flower Church, first known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Thérèse, just west of the Riverside



District and south of downtown Oklahoma City. After their expulsion from Mexico after Pancho Villa's persecutions, three priests from the Order of Discalced Carmelites arrived in Oklahoma in 1914. The Catholic Diocese in Oklahoma City sent them first to Hartshorne near McAlester, but they returned to Oklahoma City in 1921 when Bishop Theophile Meerschaert decided to build a Catholic church to accommodate the large number of Latinos residing in Oklahoma City. Before construction, some Latinos attended Mass in the basement of the St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Oklahoma City because they were not allowed to partake in the ser-

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



*Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic parish in Packingtown (photograph courtesy of the author).*

---

vices at the main altar due to their race. In 1927 engineers finished constructing the church. Not long after the canonization of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus, officials dedicated one of the altars in the new building to her. In 1932 the church officially became the Shrine of the Little Flower.<sup>8</sup>

Packingtown had a small Catholic parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the First Mexican Baptist Church, known today as *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* (First Hispanic Baptist Church), was also a successful congregation there. Little Flower Church, however, quickly became the hub or “mama parish” for most of the Latino community. Its priests held Spanish-language services, readily giving a sense of place to the Latino community. The church established a school for Latino children, provided relief for migrant families until their breadwinners found work, started a health clinic for Hispanic residents, and generally helped new arrivals settle into their new community. The parish also aided Latinos during the Great Depression and afterwards by making certain they had something to eat and a place to stay. In the 1950s Little Flower Church welcomed another influx of immigrants and continued to be a pivotal landmark for the Latino settlement in Oklahoma City. Since the lives of so many families were steeped in church culture and activities, Little Flower Church personnel strived to make sure

## LATINO IMPRESS

that Latinos received an education to help them overcome their trepidation as they faced current and future hardships. No other institution provided such support until the late 1970s; therefore, Little Flower Church continued to minister to destitute Latinos with little assistance from other community organizations. Thus, from the 1950s onward the Latino population continued growing, settling into this southern region of Oklahoma City but by the late 1970s expanding outward into the once-burgeoning vicinage of Capitol Hill.<sup>9</sup>

Established on the day of the Land Run of 1889, Capitol Hill was a community in what is today south Oklahoma City. Many of the first homes on the hill, according to the *Capitol Hill Beacon*, were little more than a “hole in the ground with a tent pitched over the top.” In 1905 the populace had grown enough to incorporate itself as an independent municipality. Two years later on November 16, 1907—the day Oklahoma became the forty-sixth state—the city became part of Oklahoma City. Even though Capitol Hill lost its distinct status, this “city within a city” continued to thrive. Furthermore, Capitol Hill maintained a reputation of being a “workingman’s home” and the “City’s Bible Belt,” “right close up to the buckle,” according to a reporter from the *Capitol*

*Little Flower Church, the "mama parish" for the Latino community in Oklahoma City (photograph courtesy of the author).*





## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



*View of the playground at Little Flower School, c. 1930s  
(photograph courtesy of the author).*

---

*Hill Beacon.* The site appealed to Anglo Packingtown workers. Several families lived there in the small white cottages and shotgun houses built from 1905 to 1915. The discovery of the Oklahoma City Oilfield in the late 1920s and the later addition of Tinker Air Force base in Midwest City (about six miles east of Capitol Hill) in 1942 during World War II (1939-45) brought many more dwellers and businesses to this convenient location.<sup>10</sup>

The main thoroughfare in Capitol Hill was Commerce Street (Southwest Twenty-fifth Street), which ran east to west from Central Avenue to Walker. From the 1950s until the 1970s Capitol Hill flourished, housing stores such as J.C. Penney, John A. Brown, and Langston's and services including banks, hospitals, religious institutions, schools, and restaurants. This locality was also an entertainment venue, home to Knob Hill Theatre (now called Oklahoma Opry) and Circle Theatre, both of which featured live theatre performances and motion pictures.<sup>11</sup> The construction of a large mall and interstate bypass route, however, changed the course of Capitol Hill's development.

In the late 1960s Oklahoma City planners and officials concurred that building an interstate bypass in south Oklahoma City, known as the West Bypass or I-240, would open up a large sector of the city to "rapid traffic and access." In February 1972 owners broke ground for a new 1.3 million-square-foot, air-conditioned shopping

complex named Crossroads Mall, contiguous to the barely begun bypass. Planners envisaged that twenty-eight hundred new jobs would result from the brand new urban center and that the West Bypass would be capable of conveying sixty thousand people daily, impelling people further south out of Capitol Hill and into southern suburban locations. By the late 1970s, therefore, many Anglos flocked to south Oklahoma City, causing significant expansion there. In an attempt to learn how they might recover some of the economic losses, the Capitol Hill neighborhood organization authorized two University of Oklahoma students to conduct a survey; the results, however, proved unhelpful. Both students agreed the district was definitely deteriorating. One cited the cause as rapid population growth to the south, while the other student determined the “area is regarded as so ‘stable’ it has a ‘stagnant’ image.”<sup>12</sup>

Residents and businessmen of Capitol Hill acknowledged that the 1970s were years of retrogression. From 1970 to 1980 the neighborhood lost 9 percent of its population. One homeowner simply said, “The children of the people who established here long ago moved to SW 36, and their children moved farther” after the bypass and shopping mall encouraged flight to the suburbs. In 1975 the Urban Renewal Authority, seeking to revitalize the surrounding district, selected a square mile surrounding the heart of Capitol Hill—Commerce Street—for an \$8.2 million community development block grant from the federal government. Unfortunately, the project failed to curb the exodus to the newly built southern suburbs. According to an editor for the *Daily Oklahoman*, by the early 1980s Capitol Hill was notorious for its “deteriorating housing, an abundance of low-income residents [Latinos], sagging businesses, and crime.” None of these disincentives, however, slowed the movement of Latinos to this locale. Abandoned by the big retailers who either moved to the new mall or were put out of business altogether during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Capitol Hill was a blighted neighborhood until the late 1980s when its Latino residents reinvigorated the vicinity.<sup>13</sup>

Latinization, enhanced and facilitated over time by various Latino citizens and organizations, became clearly visible in Riverside, Packingtown, Capitol Hill, and other areas of Oklahoma City. Because Latinos in the state recorded little of their history, most Oklahomans knew little about them until the Latino urban imprint in cities like Oklahoma City became visible. Indeed, in the 1900s Latinos were one of the only ethnic groups throughout the state that complained little about discrimination. During the

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the civil rights movement led by African Americans preoccupied Anglos in Oklahoma City and elsewhere in the country. As a result, many Anglos failed to notice the rapidly increasing Latino population. Instead of marching at the Oklahoma Capitol or forming a distinct subculture, Latinos quietly attempted to assimilate and adapt to American culture. A writer of an article in the *Daily Oklahoman* in 1967 declared that Latinos occupied an “almost forgotten third place among minority groups” and had “been left behind along with their needs.” Oklahoma Citizens of Hispanic heritage, however, did not forget their traditions.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Latinos did leave their history behind—not in the form of text but in a visible way upon the Oklahoma landscape. Over time, Latinization became more noticeable to outsiders, and the successful accomplishments of many Latino citizens drew attention to that fact.

The first heavily reported and advertised entrepreneurial success of Latinos in Oklahoma City occurred during the 1950s when the Luis Alvarado family opened four *El Charrito* Mexican restaurants, using family recipes and preparing food the way “real Mexicans know how.” The restaurant not only offered traditional-style Mexican food and the rapidly emerging Tex-Mex cuisine but also often featured performances by Spanish dancers in an attempt to promote that tradition. Their newspaper promotions showed evidence of an increasing success and acceptance in the city. In 1955 the advertisement for the restaurant was small and said simply, “Want a Lunch That Is Different? Why Not Try Mexican Food!” By February 1956 the advertisement was much larger and touted “Famous Mexican and American Foods amid the Romance of Old Mexico.” The owners also helped fellow Latinos who were in trouble. For example, a man supposedly transporting Gilberto Alviso to Indiana abandoned him in Oklahoma City. Furthermore, the driver took everything Alviso brought with him from Reynosa, Mexico. Unable to speak English, he slept in the bus station for ten days until someone told him about *El Charrito* where he might find employment. Later, Alviso went on to open his own bistro, *La Roca*.<sup>15</sup>

In 1968 the Alvarado family united with the Cueller brothers, who owned *El Chico* restaurants (opened originally in Dallas, Texas, in 1940), to make “one *El* of a family” by forming the biggest Mexican restaurant chain in the country. They operated eateries under the name *El Chico*, which continue to serve Mexican cuisine to Americans. The successes of *El Charrito* and *La Roca* paved the

way for other Latino-based businesses, many of them in the food industry. Specialized import stores and other establishments specific to the Latino culture, such as *panaderías* (bakeries), *carnicerías* (meat markets), *mercados* (grocery stores), *tortillariás* (tortilla outlets), and *taquerías* (taco stands), began opening in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were even more prevalent by the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

By 1975 a journalist for the *Daily Oklahoman* indicated that Oklahoma City's Mexican American population was in the "throes of a social boom that is changing its long-standing image of primarily a core of impoverished aliens holding low-paying jobs" to one of success and stability. In some cases the children of the first generation of Latinos had gone to school, learned English, acquired better jobs, and moved into more affluent areas. In 1975 Mexican Americans owned eighty-four businesses in Oklahoma City, and their customers were both Anglo and Latino.<sup>17</sup> David Castillo, the current executive director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, is a good example of that metamorphosis.

Born in Nebraska in 1960 to migrant farm workers from Mexico, Castillo was six months old when his family moved to the Riverside District in Oklahoma City. When he was a child, Castillo remembered that Oklahoma City had very little variety in its restaurants and businesses that purveyed goods and services to the Latino community. He recalled that few Hispanics attempted to preserve their customs due to the bigoted rules enforced in the schools and at public spaces like restaurants. For instance, when Castillo was in school, his teachers sometimes punished students who spoke Spanish. By the age of eleven he had lost all of his Spanish vocabulary and did not begin speaking Spanish again until he was fifteen. When Castillo was a teenager in the mid-1970s, he and three friends, an African American and two Anglos, went to downtown Oklahoma City for lunch; the restaurant refused service to the four young men because one was black and one was Mexican. The ethnic discrimination, however, did not thwart Castillo from venturing into the Oklahoma City business community a few years later.<sup>18</sup>

In 1982 Castillo and his in-laws, also of Mexican descent, opened what was the second Mexican import store in Oklahoma City, *Crillos de Mexico* (Traditional Mexico), across the street from Little Flower Church. Before his store opened, Latinos in Oklahoma City could not find fresh *tortillas*, *pan dulce* (sweet bread), or many other common Mexican products, even in the existing Mexican import store. Longtime Oklahoma City resident Sheryle Marlow agreed

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

that Mexican products were hard to find in the city and added that one was more likely to find “Chinese and other Oriental knick-knacks in the first Mexican import store” rather than distinctly Mexican products. In order to acquire the fresh breads to sell on their own shelves, Castillo’s in-laws had to drive to Fort Worth, Texas, every Thursday to pick up the *pan dulce* and some *tortillas*. On every other Friday, they drove to Laredo, Texas, to buy music cassettes, candies, and other hard-to-find Mexican baubles to sell in Oklahoma City.<sup>19</sup>

The location of the Mexican import store in the Riverside District and its nearness to Capitol Hill smoothed the progress toward success for Castillo and his family. In addition, Castillo joined with other Hispanics to form, publish, and distribute the first Spanish-language newspaper in Oklahoma, *La Prinsa*, a periodical released every month for a year. After that, however, the editor left, taking all of the equipment with him. Additionally, Castillo had one of the first, if not the first, Spanish radio shows. *Lo Mejor de Maestro* (The Best Music Master) aired on Saturday mornings for an hour and, after a year of successfully selling advertisements, expanded to three to four hours on Saturday mornings and afternoons. The assiduous Castillo also ran a limousine service that catered to *quinceañeras* (birthday galas for fifteen-year-old Latinas) and dances before he took on the role of executive director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.<sup>20</sup> The successes enjoyed by the owners of *El Charrito/El Chico* and the amazing accomplishments of David Castillo and his family clearly indicated the rich and changing history of Latinos in Oklahoma City from 1950 to 1980. During this time Latinos began to collaborate and work collectively in various organizations that would create more personal success stories and modify the social and urban landscape in Oklahoma City.

Since Latinos were relatively silent about their situation, their needs in the way of civic, economic, and educational aid and support generally went unnoticed. Indeed, the difficult process of integrating into the American lifestyle left many émigrés, both legal and illegal, impoverished and with few resources besides the assistance from Little Flower Church and its Catholic Action Club. In 1967 the advice of a Mexican resident in Oklahoma City was that “the best way to get ahead is learn as much and accept as much of the different culture as possible.” However, not everyone agreed with that assessment. That same year Reverend Orra G. Compton of the

Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission avowed, "There is no organized attempt to help the Latin Americans in Oklahoma City and no group knows much about their 'ill-defined' problems."<sup>21</sup>

By the mid-1970s, after countless meetings with various Oklahoma City community organizations, concerned citizens began forming agencies that would specifically aid Hispanics. One of the first was the Riverside Neighborhood Association, established in response to the Urban Renewal Authority's planned destruction of their community. Once this alliance developed, a sense of identity began to spread across the Latino population; the collaboration of the participants in the Riverside Neighborhood Association sparked interest in other Latinos to begin their own support coalitions. For example, in the 1970s residents created the Mexican American Cultural Center (later named the Oklahoma Hispanic Cultural Center) and the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association, while the United Latin Association organized in the city as well.<sup>22</sup>

The Mexican American Cultural Center focused on making Hispanics in Oklahoma City more aware of their own specific needs, especially in the areas of education, learning English, and understanding the American system of business. In 1979 the Mexican American Cultural Center allowed the Oklahoma Immigration Counseling Project (OICP) to establish an office in its facility to serve the populace and to provide not only money but also technical advice and assistance. The OICP met with Hispanic visitors from as far away as the Oklahoma Panhandle. During the 1980s the Oklahoma Hispanic Cultural Center, as it became known, supported the publication of a four-page monthly tabloid *La Voz* (*The Voice*) that was sporadically published. By 1983 the editors claimed to reach more than one hundred thousand Hispanics throughout Oklahoma, giving them "news and information not available elsewhere."<sup>23</sup>

According to newspaper articles the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association focused more on Latino identity and culture. The group planned various events, including *fiestas*, carnivals, and parades; set up cultural display booths at places such as Crossroads Mall, especially during National Hispanic Heritage Week; and hosted folkloric dances, *mariachis* (Mexican musical groups), and celebrations on September 16 (Mexican Independence Day). Other smaller organizations formed throughout the 1980s, such as the Annual Mexican Fiesta Organization, Pan American Golf for Men and Women, and a group of the Hispanic Churches of Oklahoma City. By 1982 Capitol Hill's neighborhood association reorganized,

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

establishing a voice for the Latino population living there. While groups like these helped Hispanics in many ways, their children's education had suffered ever since they began migrating to Oklahoma.<sup>24</sup>

A serious lack of interest in education persisted among many Latino families owing to their cultural norms. One reason they brought with them from their homelands was that families simply could not afford to allow their teenagers to attend school; they needed the income the young people could provide. A second motive was that Latinos were not accustomed to valuing education as a way to improve their lives. The first efforts toward improving education came when Little Flower Church officials built a schoolhouse to accommodate the Spanish-speaking community. Few state-funded schools met the needs of the Latino populace until the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, public schools in south Oklahoma City began seeing new faces as more Latinos began seeking public education. Clearly, more help was vital.

The problem was indeed serious: a Latino with little schooling would not be able to find a desirable job, and uneducated Hispanics who were "lucky enough to get a job work[ed] for \$3 an hour." A similar situation occurred for Latino entrepreneurs who were in danger of losing their businesses altogether. One man stated that merchants in Capitol Hill attempted to obtain assistance for their "businesses from government agencies" and called it a "frustrating experience" with little results. With the number of dropouts and those unemployed rising daily, someone had to step up to help. In the late 1970s the Mexican American Cultural Center and the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association began working together to promote education for families. These organizations realized that the state's yearly budgets for education did not include enough funds to hire the number of Spanish-speaking teachers needed to accommodate all of the Latino children. The need became even greater when in 1982 a U.S. Supreme Court order forced Oklahoma public schools to allow all Latinos, whether legal or illegal, to enroll in the school district where they lived, whether or not their parents could prove residency.<sup>26</sup>

Several other groups organized to assist with the education, adjustment, and integration of Latinos in Oklahoma City and the rest of Oklahoma. These included the Latino Development Agency, Legal Aid of Western Oklahoma, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the American G.I. Forum, the Oklahoma Association of Hispanic Professionals, the Latin American Council for Human

## LATINO IMPRESS

Rights, the Salvation Army, the Catholic Hispanic Affairs Commission, Catholic Charities, and the Governor's Hispanic Council. These associations offered educational services, employment direction, medical assistance, social and legal guidance, immigration and naturalization information, programs for youths, and consulting services for entrepreneurs. In addition, they helped fund bilingual signs, pamphlets, and other items Latinos might have needed to make the transition to the American lifestyle.<sup>27</sup>

While Latinos continued to witness improvement in their situation in Oklahoma City during the late 1970s and early 1980s despite statewide economic problems caused by the downturn in the oil business, Latinization of the city's cultural landscape increased since the late 1980s along with the numbers of Hispanics. In 1980 the Hispanic segment of Oklahoma City's total population of 403,213 numbered 7,265. By 1990 the Hispanic count nearly tripled to 22,003 of the 444,719 total residents, and in 2000 it swelled to 51,368 of the overall populace of 506,132. By 2006 the U.S. Census Bureau reported 79,617 Latinos living in the city, and in 2008 that estimate rose to 82,395.<sup>28</sup> The importance of organization and guidance also increased accordingly, and Latinos responded over the ensuing years.

*The Latino Community Development Agency, located in the Riverside neighborhood, provides Hispanic residents with education, healthcare, and other means of support. The center also has an early Headstart program that caters to children with impoverished parents of any race (photograph courtesy of the author).*





## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

Leaders came forward to serve as important advocates for the Latinos in the city. In 1991 long-established Oklahoma City resident John Martinez helped organize activities for National Hispanic Month and aided other Hispanic leaders in obtaining a gymnasium for Latino youths, hoping to combat gang activity. That same year Patricia Fennell, a native of Ecuador and also a longtime Oklahoma City resident, established the Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA) with a mission “to enhance the life of the Latino community through education, leadership, services, and advocacy.” Over the years Fennell assisted a number of Latino students, entrepreneurs, and families in getting a head start on a new life. In addition, she was a primary voice for Latinos on many issues in the Riverside District, Capitol Hill, and other locations of Oklahoma City, working to preserve Latino identity in important ways.<sup>29</sup>

Oklahoma City metropolitan universities also reached out to the surrounding Latino population. The University of Oklahoma joined the “Hot List” of the top seven hundred best colleges for Hispanics to attend in 1997. The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) started a Miss Hispanic UCO Pageant in 1999. Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) and the Hispanic Organization to Promote Education worked together to increase the Hispanic student population there from 2 percent in 1990, to 5 percent in 2001, and to 8 percent of the total student population in 2009.<sup>30</sup> The educational outreach by Latino organizations and Oklahoma’s higher education institutions without a doubt improved the situations of many Hispanic residents.

Hispanic businesses, undoubtedly the most noticeable Latinized cultural landscape feature, continued to develop and prosper with help from local organizations. In 2000 an organization formed to support local Hispanic businesses and to assist with maintaining their uniqueness. Inspired by the Dallas Hispanic Chamber, Oklahoma City residents Cervel “Ray” Doonkeen, Yvonne Gonzales, and other prominent Hispanic business people opened the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to serve and “create a vibrant economic environment” for the mushrooming Latino business population in Oklahoma City. This Hispanic chamber was a second effort to organize in the city within a five-year period, and its founders made sure the second time was successful. The chamber aided Latino entrepreneurs by making a “bridge between the Hispanic and Anglo communities in Oklahoma City,” creating a network with other Latino businesses, and helping with the

development of “business plans and successful marketing strategies.” State Senator Jim Reynolds supported the chamber’s efforts and encouraged Hispanics to “get involved and become more a part of what’s going on in the state” because, he said, “It’s a benefit to them, as well as to the entire city.” Charles Garner, former owner of Budget Foods in Capitol Hill where many Hispanics used to shop, joined the chamber when it opened. Garner did not speak Spanish but from firsthand experiences knew that the Hispanic Chamber was essential in order for Oklahoma City Latinos to become flourishing capitalists. Gonzales hoped that within ten years the chamber would have a permanent office, a full time staff, workshops, and a business incubator program.<sup>31</sup> Almost a decade later the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce was running strong, and David Castillo made sure the chamber met Gonzales’s wishes.

Since 2005 Castillo served as the executive director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He assisted with developing the mission of the Hispanic Chamber—to support “the economic development, competitive advancement and improvements in the skills of business owners, [and] merchants in the Hispanic community of the City.” In 2006, after receiving a \$141,000 economic development grant from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, OCCC teamed up with the Hispanic Chamber to help Latino-owned businesses in Oklahoma City. Castillo stated that not only will this “bring good development to the city because you’re going to have more Hispanic business and more Hispanic business that will be flourishing” but also administration by OCCC will mean “a great outreach to bring Hispanic students to college.”<sup>32</sup>

In 2007 the Hispanic Chamber, after receiving a \$20,000 CasaCyber Technology Grant from the AT&T Foundation, began offering a Business Incubator Program to help Latino entrepreneurs succeed with their capitalist ventures, fulfilling a dream of founding member Yvonne Gonzales. Castillo believed that with education and with the support of the Hispanic Chamber Latino capitalists would “drive the economy” with their small businesses. Other Hispanic Chamber programs were its Governmental Affairs Committee “to promote and protect political interests of the organization and the Hispanic community” and the Chamber Foundation “to provide Hispanic youth with academic opportunities and professional experience.” Since 2002 it also sponsored an annual Hispanic Expo, the largest event for Latino businesses and services in the state.<sup>33</sup>

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

In 2001 when the *Daily Oklahoman* began running articles about the rising Hispanic population, a journalist reported the state of Oklahoma had about two thousand Latino-owned businesses that generated an estimated \$600 million dollars in sales, a by-product of the state's 114 percent Hispanic population increase between 1990 and 2000. In 2008 a journalist for the *Oklahoman* wrote, "Hispanic-owned businesses line SW 44 and SW 29 as well as Western and Walker avenues, diversifying this once homogenous community" in south Oklahoma City. One resident reported, "There has been a lot of Mexican restaurants opening up, and now there's this big Mexican grocery store in the old Homeland building" (*El Mariachi Supermercado*).<sup>34</sup>

Hispanics also began to be recognized as important consumers. In 2003 former chair of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Cervel "Ray" Doonkeen stated that few Oklahoma City businesses actually "comprehend the enormity of the economic impact" that the Latino population's buying power would have in the city over the next ten years. Using the example of Capitol Hill, Doonkeen noted that leasers were "giving away office space" but he projected a shortage within the next few years because of continued Hispanic growth. In 2003 First Commercial Bank Vice President Lynn Groves stated that the bank was "cognizant of the shift in Oklahoma City's demographics" and had implemented a plan in the late 1990s to target Hispanic customers by seeking out bilingual employees to work at each of their local branches, particularly the one in Capitol Hill. Other businesses also acknowledged the increasing Latino population. Buy for Less grocery stores in south Oklahoma City recognized the growing Hispanic community, and storeowners in the Latinized parts of Oklahoma City changed the name to Buy for Less Super *Mercado* and began selling more Latino-specific products. For example, in December 2009 one Buy for Less grocery store owner in the Little Flower Church area said that he ordered "extra corn husks and masa, a corn-based dough, every year in the weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday" because those were "key components" of the foods Hispanics traditionally enjoy more of at Christmas.<sup>35</sup>

In the early 2000s an Asian American opened *El Mariachi Supermercado*; Mario Delgado and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado joked that it was the only place one could purchase a wok and a *molcajete* (the Spanish version of the mortar and pestle tool used for grinding spices) on the same aisle.<sup>36</sup> Besides this anomaly shoppers at *El Mariachi Supermercado* could purchase specific items rarely found



*According to local residents, Tacoville has been open in southwest Oklahoma City since the late 1960s (photograph courtesy of the author).*

---

in Oklahoma's Anglo-oriented grocery stores, such as an entire *cabeza de baca* (cow's head), fresh *churros* (cinnamon fry bread), fresh *tortillas*, and fresh *tamales*. Most *mercados*, including *El Mariachi Supermercado*, also had full-service delis and bakeries that served *tacos*, *tortas* (sandwiches), various *pans* (breads), and *dulces* (sweets).

In addition to major businesses and various medical centers catering to the rapidly increasing Latino population, a surfeit of small businesses such as *cantinas* (bars), *discotecas* (dance clubs), restaurants, remittance shops, and *carnicerías* (meat markets/general stores) opened in Oklahoma City over the years and in surrounding metropolitan areas since the 1990s. While the names of these businesses typically indicated the Latinized impress, the businesses also exhibited other characteristics of Latinization. Stores with multicolored facades and business signs exhibiting symbols of Hispanic heritage or the colors of ethnic flags lined the streets in some areas. Some establishments had murals, often on both the outside and the inside of the building, that signified ethnicity by portraying popular landscape scenes or important historic figures of the owner's country of origin. Decorations such as *piñatas*, cacti and other plants, rugs, vases, and other trinkets filled spaces within the restaurants and other businesses. Latinization was profound in many of these businesses, whether the owner was a Latino or a non-Latino seeking to attract Latino customers.

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



*Once lined with middle class department stores and theaters, this street in Capitol Hill is an example of a Latinized Main Street. Several Hispanic-owned and influenced stores and restaurants line this avenue (photograph courtesy of the author).*

*La Herradura, located in Packingtown, is one of the largest panaderías in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area (photograph courtesy of the author).*



Hispanic-run eateries, such as *El Charrito* and *La Roca*, were the first Latinized businesses to appear on the Oklahoma City cultural landscape, and Latinized restaurants became abundant in the city. One of the oldest small restaurants is Tacoville located in southwest Oklahoma City. Residents there recall that the eatery started in the late 1960s. Another restaurant locals frequented was *El Alex*, which, like Tacoville, is still in business today in Capitol Hill. David Castillo estimated that this establishment began its operation during the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

Other small Hispanic-influenced businesses were becoming common in the 1990s. For instance, residents reported that Mexico Transfers, a remittance shop in Capitol Hill that is painted bright yellow, opened in the mid-1990s. *San Nachos*, a Latino-owned *cantina*, and *Panadería La Mexican Bakery and Imports*, a Latino-owned *panadería*, *carnicería*, and *tamalería* (tamale shop), originated around the same time during the 1990s in the Capitol Hill area. In Packingtown, *Panadería La Herradura* opened in the late 1990s. *Carnicerías*, such as *Super Mercados Morelos/Cash America Pawn* in northwest Oklahoma City, *Carnicería El Rodeo* (with a colorful mural painted on its windows) in west Oklahoma

City, and *Carnicería La Hacienda* in south Oklahoma City, started during the first few years of the 2000s.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, *discotecas*, such as OK Corral in northwest Oklahoma City and Copa Cabana, Safari, and Chihuahua's Bar (with its business sign painted in the colors of the Mexican flag) on the southwest Oklahoma City landscape, began appearing around the same time.

Over the last several years diversified Latino businesses have opened. *Curiosidades Guatemala* (also known as *Tienda Guatemala*) in northwest Oklahoma City sells food during lunch and *curios* (souvenirs). The store also has a remittance license and allows customers to pay their bills there. Diversity is also apparent in the various restaurants that offer ethnic cuisines of specific Latin American countries. Such establishments include *Café Antigua* and The Brothers Restaurant, both of which serve Guatemalan fare and are located in northwest Oklahoma City, and *El Salvador Restaurante Y Pupusería* located near Bethany. One favorite among locals is *Café do Brasil*—owned by native Brazilian Ana Paixao Davis—which started in northwest Oklahoma City and moved to the Midtown area of downtown Oklahoma City in 2005.<sup>39</sup>

Other Hispanic businesses have also diffused throughout the greater Oklahoma City metropolitan area. For instance, in Edmond, a suburb fifteen miles north of Oklahoma City, the general store/restaurant *La Perla* has a neon business sign that displays the Mexican flag colors. A Peruvian in Edmond manages *Zarate's* Latin Mexican Grill, a brightly painted Latin American restaurant. The sunny yellow *Pepe's* Mexican Restaurant with its Spanish architectural flare is one of Edmond's oldest restaurants. Additionally, the fast food eatery *Carnitas Michoacán*, *El Parian* Mexican Restaurant, and a convenience store *Guadalupana* enliven Edmond's cultural landscape. Norman, a suburb fifteen miles south of Oklahoma City, boasts a restaurant that serves Peruvian food, *Mamaveca* Mexican Restaurant, and a Caribbean-influenced restaurant named Monique's Corner, operated by a Venezuelan and located near the University of Oklahoma's Campus Corner.<sup>40</sup>

Other vital innovations seen and heard throughout the city include Spanish-language newspapers, such as *Viva Oklahoma* (which is part of the *Oklahoman* production line), *El Nacional de Oklahoma*, and *Nuestra Comunidad*. Additionally, three Latino radio stations now serve Oklahoma City and surrounding metro areas: FM 106.7 *Anúnciate en La Zeta*, FM 105.3 *La Indomable*, and AM 1460 *La Tremenda Radio Mexico en Oklahoma*. Television stations KTUZ *Telemundo* and KUOK *Univisión* provide the Latino

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

population in Oklahoma City and nearby cities with news and Spanish-language television programming. Although much of their history may still not be in written form today, the current history of Latinos has indeed become more discernible across the Oklahoma City landscape in many ways and forms.

After World War II Oklahoma successfully transitioned to a post-war economy. Migrants, particularly those from Latin America, trekked to the state with hope for better lives than the ones they left behind. Oklahoma's economic bust in the late 1970s and early 1980s created hardships on some and opened doors for others, namely the Latinos. The abandonment of the white community—that left Capitol Hill and went to the suburbs—proffered an opportunity for Latinos to buy property and create *colonias* (colonies) within a city there. Such *colonias* are unique to Hispanic cultural identity.



*Tamalería located in southwest Oklahoma City (photograph courtesy of the author).*

Today, Oklahoma City's cultural landscape, particularly in the southern portion of the city and in adjacent metropolitan areas, consists of full Spanish-language billboard advertisements and a plethora of *carnicerías*, *panaderías*, *tortillariás*, *taquerías*, *tamalerías*, and *cantinas*. Additionally, *iglesias* (churches) of denominations other than Catholic, such as Baptist, First Christian, and Assembly of God, have names that denote their Latin heritage. Little Flower Church is thriving as a large, urban parish and has

## LATINO IMPRESS



*Since the 1990s, many churches in the southern area of Oklahoma City have Latinized. This church's exterior is painted pink (photograph courtesy of the author).*

approximately three thousand Hispanic parishioners who attend the four Spanish masses offered each weekend. In January 2009 Oklahoma State Superintendent of Education Sandy Garrett said that 40 percent of Oklahoma City Public Schools' students in 2008 were Hispanic but that the state continued to have a serious shortage of English-as-a-Second-Language teachers.<sup>41</sup> Obviously further work awaits in the public schools.

New land uses might affect historic Hispanic ties to the area in the near future. The 2006 Core to Shore redevelopment plan implemented by the city of Oklahoma City envisages a total revitalization of the historic Riverside District. While the church will remain, the Riverside District neighborhood will eventually become the site for an urban park and residential development. The upscale housing the plan foresees will undoubtedly force Hispanic residents to relocate from their traditional Oklahoma City community to one of the other Latino *colonias* or possibly to a new area.

Recently, Hispanics suffered a small setback in the state. Passed in 2007, Oklahoma House Bill 1804, an attempt to crack down on illegal immigration, initially caused many legal Hispanics to feel fearful of discrimination and caused some establishments to go out of business because of a decline in clientele. However, according to a 2010 report by the Urban Land Institute of Washington, D.C., Oklahoma House Bill 1804 has had "little effect on decreasing the number of immigrant families" in Oklahoma City. The lead author of the report, Robin Koralek, stated nonetheless a "culture of fear and confusion" still exists within Oklahoma City's Hispanic community. After two and a half years and with some parts of the law still contested in court, concern about House Bill 1804 has lessened.



## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA



*Chicano lowrider culture is becoming more popular in Oklahoma City. This young man was preparing his car for a lowrider contest at a local park in 2009 (photograph courtesy of the author).*

---

More businesses are obtaining licenses to open, and the Latino population continues to swell.<sup>42</sup>

Latinos have more than a century of significant history in Oklahoma City, and the dearth of documentation about Hispanics in that metropolitan area provides an intriguing opportunity for further research. The description of Latinos as Oklahoma City's invisible minority is no longer valid. The present reality is that Latinos have persevered in Oklahoma City and will no doubt continue to persevere despite anything city planners might decide to undertake. Wilfredo Santos-Riviera, an active Oklahoma City educator, commented that the Latino history in Oklahoma has been "a struggle of slow but steady progress" and avowed that with new programs and with cooperation among organized groups throughout the state "the future is ours."<sup>43</sup> Oklahoma City's Latino cultural landscape depicts that progress, and the city's landscape will likely continue to change and to delineate the ways Hispanics integrate in Oklahoma.

## Endnotes

\* Jeffrey M. Widener is a Ph.D. student in geography at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. The author is very much obliged to those who gave their time for interviews to make this project possible and to Drs. Douglas A. Hurt, Kenny L. Brown, and Theresa Vaughan at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond for their invaluable comments and support in preparing this manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 25-27, 30; Michael Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma* (Stillwater, OK: Crossroads Oklahoma Project, 1981), 11-12; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," by Michael Smith, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910*, vol. 3, "Table 2," 480; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950*, vol. II, part 36, "Table 4," 36-38; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, vol. III, *Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States*, "Table 6," 815; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Immigration," by Donald N. Brown, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/I/IM001.html>. For Oklahoma City's overall population totals from 1910 to 1940, the 1950 census will be cited. Hispanic, which refers to a person from a Spanish-speaking country, and Latino/Latina, which implies that a person is from Latin America, will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. For discussions of terminology, see Marta E. Giménez, "Latino/Hispanic—Who Needs a Name? The Case against a Standard Terminology," *International Journal of Health Services* 19, no. 3 (1989): 557-71; Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 12-18; Linda Martín Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic: The Politics of Ethnic Names," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, no. 4 (2005): 395-407.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930 Population*, vol. III, part 2: *Montana-Wyoming*, "Table 17," 573; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950*, vol. II, part 36, "Table 4," 36-38; Larry "Buddy" Johnson (librarian, Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library), in discussion with the author, February 4, 2009; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940*, vol. II, part 5: *New York-Oregon*, "Table A49," 948; Douglas S. Massey and Kathleen M. Schnabel, "Recent Trends in Hispanic Immigration to the United States," *International Migration Review* 17, no. 2 (1983): 212; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Hispanics," by Michael Smith, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/H/HI014.html>. The 1940 number is the total for residents from Mexico (317), Cuba and other West Indies (15), and Central and South America (10).

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 11, 17, 25-26; Smith, *Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 1, 11; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," by Michael Smith, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html>; Johnson, discussion; Mario Delgado (teacher) and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado (realtor), in discussion with the author, February 7, 2009; Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community," *Oklahoma Journal* (Oklahoma City), March 1, 1975; Tom McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans," *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), April 6, 1975. Today this portion of the

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

North Canadian River is known as the Oklahoma River. It is located just south of the Oklahoma City central business district.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, discussion; David Castillo (executive director, Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Delgado and Vallejo-Delgado, discussion; Patricia Fennell (executive director, Latino Community Development Agency), in discussion with the author, February 13, 2009; Teresa Rendon (attorney), in discussion with the author, March 3, 2009; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Sigrid Abbott, "Aliens 'Walk in Shadows,'" *Daily Oklahoman*, April 6, 1975; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Sales within Riverside Addition, accessed April 3, 2009, <http://www.oklahomacounty.org/assessor/Searches/SubdivSearchSalesDate.asp?SUBNO=09063>.

<sup>5</sup> Castillo, discussion; Delgado and Vallejo-Delgado, discussion; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Rendon, discussion; McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans."

<sup>6</sup> Brian Brus, "Stockyards Beef Up Security," *Journal Record* (Oklahoma City), February 20, 2009, accessed February 20, 2009, [www.journalrecord.com](http://www.journalrecord.com); John Greiner, "Que Problemas? Needs of Latins in City Clouded," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 3, 1967; Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 119, 191.

<sup>7</sup> John Martinez, interview by Rodger Harris, April 16, 2008, Oral History Collection, Research Center, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; Rodger Harris (folk life director and oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society), in discussion with the author, February 18, 2009; Castillo, discussion; Sam Stalcup, email message to Bob Waldrop, July 15, 2007, accessed April 3, 2009; <http://shire.symonds.net/pipermail/ok-sus/2007-July/003668.html>; Michael Smith, "Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900-1930," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1981): 240; Katherine Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta," *Orbit Magazine* (*Daily Oklahoman*), June 27, 1971; Abbott, "Aliens."

<sup>8</sup> *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Little Flower Church, Oklahoma City," by James D. White, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/L/LI014.html>; "Please Help Us for the Love of God," *Little Flower Magazine*, August 1922, 13, Carmelite Archives, Marylake Monastery, East End, AR (hereafter cited as CA, MM, EE, AR); Smith, *Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 57-58; Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta"; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Order of Discalced Carmelites." by James D. White, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/O/OR003.html>; "An Altar to the Little Flower," *Little Flower Magazine*, June 1923, n. p., CA, MM, EE, AR.

<sup>9</sup> Greiner, "Que Problemas?"; Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta"; Fennell, discussion; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Martinez, interview; *Church of the Little Flower and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Dedication, March 24, 1927*, CA, MM, EE, AR; Smith, *Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 51; Johnson, discussion.

<sup>10</sup> *An Early History of Capitol Hill: Compiled from the files of the Capitol Hill Beacon and other sources to mark the 60th Anniversary of this Community Newspaper, founded September 15, 1905* (Oklahoma City: Capitol Hill Beacon, 1965); Jan Jenning and Herbert Gottfried, *Oklahoma City 1890 to 1930: Platted, Parked, and Populated* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Community Development Department, 1982), 17, 19; "Capitol Hill Is Proud to Be City's Bible Belt," *Capitol Hill Beacon* (Oklahoma City), January 27, 1950; "Capitol Hill's on 'Sunny Side' of River," *Oklahoma Journal*, June 30, 1971. The town's name was Capitol Hill, but the state Capitol Building is not located there.

<sup>11</sup> *An Early History of Capitol Hill*; Jenning and Gottfried, *Oklahoma City*, 19; Sheryle Marlow (professor of geography and political science, Oklahoma City Community College and University of Central Oklahoma), in discussion with the author, April 3, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> "Crossroads Shopping Center Breaks Ground," *Capitol Hill Beacon*, February 24, 1972, in *Capitol Hill Beacon, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Progress Edition: The Year Book of South OKC* (Oklahoma City: Capitol Hill Beacon, 1973), 133; Covey Bean, "I-240 Segment Open for Travel," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 17, 1980; Marlow, discussion; *Capitol Hill Beacon, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Progress Edition*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> "Capitol Hill Begins Climb Out of Economic Valley," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 5, 1982; "Original Dreams of Capitol Site Provide Area with Rich History," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 5, 1982; Marlow, discussion; Castillo, discussion; Fennell, discussion; "Capitol Hill Begins Climb."

<sup>14</sup> Greiner, "Que Problemas?"; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Steve Hoffman, "Family Feels 'All-American,'" *Oklahoma Journal*, March 3, 1978; Smith, *Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 19; "Mexican Life," *Orbit Magazine (Daily Oklahoman)*, November 19, 1961.

<sup>15</sup> "Two Great Families Are Getting Together to Cook You the Best Mexican Food You'll Ever Taste in Oklahoma," *Daily Oklahoman*, December 22, 1968; "Want a Lunch That is Different?," *Daily Oklahoman*, April 18, 1955; "El Charrito Famous Mexican Restaurants," *Daily Oklahoman*, February 24, 1956; "Spanish Dancers to Perform," *Daily Oklahoman*, December 6, 1950; Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta."

<sup>16</sup> "Two Great Families," 119; "El Charrito Famous Mexican Restaurants," *Daily Oklahoman*, February 24, 1956; "El Chico Café," accessed April 27, 2009, <http://www.elchico.com/>; Castillo, discussion; Norman Smith, "Sooner Taste Buds Shout 'Ole!,'" *Orbit Magazine (Daily Oklahoman)*, September 14, 1975.

<sup>17</sup> Abbott, "Aliens," 1; McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans," 10.

<sup>18</sup> Castillo, discussion.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; Marlow, discussion.

<sup>20</sup> Castillo, discussion.

<sup>21</sup> Greiner, "Que Problemas?"; Delgado and Vallejo-Delgado, discussion; Fennell, discussion; Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta"; Castillo, discussion.

<sup>22</sup> Fennell, discussion; Castillo, discussion; Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; Steve Hoffman, "Cultural Center Stresses Jobs, Education," *Oklahoma Journal*, March 4, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman, "Cultural Center"; Diane Hust, "Immigration Project Aids all Nationalities," *Oklahoma City Times*, December 6, 1979; Rolf Olsen, "Newspaper Spreading its Voice throughout Hispanic Community," *Daily Oklahoman*, January 4, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> "Hispanic Heritage to Be Marked," *Daily Oklahoman*, July 8, 1980; Gall Mitchell, "700 Turn Out for Annual Mexican Fiesta," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 13, 1980; Rolf Olsen, "Capitol Hill Homeowners to Reorganize," *Daily Oklahoman*, November 8, 1982; Greiner, "Que Problemas?"

<sup>25</sup> Hoffman, "Cultural Center"; Martinez, interview; Wilfredo Santos-Riviera (educator, Oklahoma City Public Schools), in discussion with the author, February 20, 2009; Marlow, discussion.

<sup>26</sup> Hoffman, "Cultural Center"; Gall Mitchell, "Mexican Immigrant," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 11, 1979; Jim Killackey, "Aliens Given Education, State Officials Report," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 16, 1982; "Court Boosts Alien Rights," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 16, 1982.

## THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

<sup>27</sup> *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Hispanics," by Michael Smith, accessed January 24, 2009, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/H/HI014.html>; Benjamin Clark (museum curator, Oklahoma Historical Society), in discussion with the author, February 10, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Castillo, discussion; Fennell, discussion; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population* (Oklahoma), PC-80-1-D38, "Table 198," 19 (This number is the number of persons who used Spanish as the primary language in their households in cities with a population greater than one hundred thousand); U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1980," "Table 21," accessed March 16, 2010, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab21.txt>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics Oklahoma, 1990 CP-1-38*, "Table 1," 4, "Table 6," 33; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing: Oklahoma Summary Population and Housing Characteristics*, PHC-1-38, "Table 4," 94, "Table 2," 44; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Oklahoma City, Oklahoma," *2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*, accessed February 6, 2010, <http://factfinder.census.gov/>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Oklahoma City, Oklahoma," *2008 American Community Survey*, accessed February 6, 2010, <http://factfinder.census.gov/>.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Medley, "Hispanic Heritage Cited," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 20, 1991; Fennell, discussion; Boyd Shook (doctor), in discussion with the author, February 22, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> "OU on Hispanic 'Hot List,'" *Daily Oklahoman*, February 3, 1997; "Miss Hispanic UCO Pageant Set," *Daily Oklahoman*, October 8, 2001; Ben Scott, "Hispanic Enrollment Triples," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 6, 2001; Tim Henley, "OCCC to Use New Grant for Hispanic Businesses," *Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), February 15, 2006; Marlow, discussion.

<sup>31</sup> Jody Noerdlinger, "Chamber Unites Hispanic Business," *Daily Oklahoman*, December 28, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Gerardo Serra, "The Mission of the Chamber, Present and Future," *Hispanic Chamber Review 2008*, 2008, 4; Henley, "OCCC To Use New Grant."

<sup>33</sup> Noerdlinger, "Chamber Unites Hispanic Business"; Gerardo Serra, "Incubating for Success: New Program Aimed to Help New Hispanic Entrepreneurs," *Hispanic Chamber Review 2008*, 8; Jim Stafford, "Questions and Answers with David Castillo," *Oklahoman*, May 3, 2006; Castillo, discussion; Gerardo Serra, "The Chamber Takes Actions with New Committee," *Hispanic Chamber Review 2008*, 14; Gerardo Serra, "Working for the Future of Hispanics," *Hispanic Chamber Review 2008*, 18; Gerardo Serra, "The Chamber Expo, Promoting Hispanic Business," *Hispanic Chamber Review 2008*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Tom Lindley, "Growing Hispanic Numbers in State Drawing Attention," *Daily Oklahoman*, August 5, 2001; Devona Walker, "The Changing Face of the Heartland," *Oklahoman*, February 18, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Janice Francis-Smith, "Oklahoma Businesses Prepare for the Hispanic Explosion," *Journal Record*, July 16, 2003, accessed February 5, 2008, [www.journalrecord.com](http://www.journalrecord.com); Jesse Olivarez, "Holiday Ceremony a Hispanic Tradition: OKC Las Posadas Ceremony Draws Throngs," *Tulsa World*, December 26, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Delgado and Vallejo-Delgado, discussion.

<sup>37</sup> Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community"; McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans"; Castillo, discussion.

<sup>38</sup> Castillo, discussion.

## LATINO IMPRESS

<sup>39</sup> Kelley Chambers, "These Walls: Garrison Funeral Home/*Café do Brasil*," *Journal Record*, July 27, 2009, accessed July 29, 2009, [www.journalrecord.com](http://www.journalrecord.com).

<sup>40</sup> Dave Cathey, "Couple Share Dishes, Culture of West Indies at Norman Restaurant: Dining: It's a Caribbean Feast at Monique's Corner," *Oklahoman*, October 7, 2009, accessed January 31, 2010, <http://www.allbusiness.com/food-beverage/restaurants-food-service/13152704-1.html>.

<sup>41</sup> "Hispanics Double in Some Areas," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 16, 1999; Barbara Hoberock, "Hispanic Percentage up Sharply in Schools," *Tulsa World*, January 13, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Devona Walker, "Immigration: People Calling Department of Homeland Security Crackdown Measures . . . 'Devastating for the Economy,'" *Oklahoman*, September 18, 2007; Omer Gillham, "Researchers Assess HB 1804," *Tulsa World*, February 3, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Santos-Riviera, discussion.