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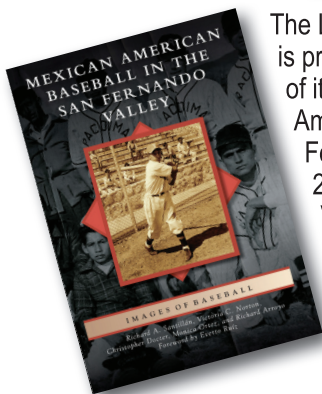
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# LATINO BASEBALL HISTORY PROJECT:

## NEWSLETTER



### THE LATINO BASEBALL HISTORY PROJECT ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF ITS 7TH BOOK: MEXICAN AMERICAN BASEBALL IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY



The Latino Baseball History Project is proud to announce the release of its seventh book, Mexican American Baseball in the San Fernando Valley on Oct. 19, 2015. The San Fernando Valley is located north of the Los Angeles Basin, surrounded by the Santa Susana, Santa Monica, San Gabriel, and Verdugo mountain ranges. The

region began as a handful of sleepy agricultural towns that has exploded into one of the most famous suburbs in America, containing over 1.8 million residents. Mexicans hold a storied presence in the area dating long before statehood in 1850, when they owned vast ranchlands across the valley. By the early 20th century, thousands of Mexicans from the southwest and Mexico joined longtime Mexican Californians to form vibrant neighborhoods in the few valley towns. Many worked on the citrus orchards, packinghouses, ranches, and railroads, while others started companies in the construction, transportation, produce, and disposal industries. The Mexican American population was vital to the early agricultural and industrial growth of the San Fernando Valley.

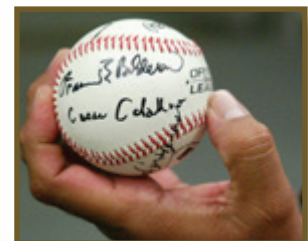
Mexican American communities in the valley were linked through family ties, occupations, and social activities such as jamaicas and sports. They lived in an incredibly tight-knit environment where everybody knew everybody. Mexican Americans played baseball in the San Fernando Valley since the late 19th century. Through baseball and softball games, different barrios maintained connections with each other. On weekends, both men's and women's games attracted hundreds of spectators. They gathered at vacant lots,

ringing their cars around the field of play to form a makeshift outfield barrier or packed the grandstands of professional quality baseball fields. Furthermore, Mexican Americans played alongside white, black and Japanese Americans.

Extensive travel to central California and into Mexico allowed players to network with other regions. Games between San Fernando Valley and visiting Mexican teams acted as important diplomatic events, at times bringing together politicians such as the Los Angeles Mexican consul and California governor.

Baseball and softball were central to numerous Mexican American families. It was not unusual for all members of a family to participate on teams. These athletic families promoted female participation in sports that transcended gender norms of the time and established baseball and softball traditions that have lasted multiple generations. Their descendants continue their legacy today, competing in youth, high school, college and professional leagues.

Mexican American Baseball in the San Fernando Valley explores the teams  
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# “Pitch’m Fast Pauly” ... The Mexican American Fast-pitch Softball Leagues

By *Genovevo Teodoro (Gene T.) Chávez Ortiz, Ed.D.*

The passion and enthusiasm for baseball in Mexico runs deep and reaches back to the late 1800s. The Mexican



***Railways Ice Company Mexican American Baseball Team, Argentine, Kansas, 1940***

Baseball League (MBL) was formed in 1925 and is classified as AAA Baseball. The MBL however is not a part of the USA Major League farm club system. Given the persistent stereotyping and discrimination often encountered by Mexican immigrants, alternative and parallel leagues were formed by Mexicans immigrants and their United States born children to pursue America’s favorite sport.

The United States has had and continues to have a love/hate relationship with Mexico. That relationship is reflected in the development of Mexican American baseball and fast-pitch softball leagues. Richard Santillan wrote, “Sports have been a major presence in the lives of Mexican Americans since the early 20th century. This has been particularly true of Mexican Americans in the Midwest, where sports such as baseball took on a special significance. More than merely games for boys and girls, the teams and contests involved nearly the entire community, and often had political and cultural objectives...” (Feb. 16, 2001, an article published in Vol. 7 of *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*). Those political and cultural objectives evolved to provide a sense of community solidarity, develop leadership, and strengthen ethnic identity. In pre-World War II America, large numbers of baseball teams were formed and facilitated by companies to promote company name recognition and to build rapport among their employees. Many companies lent support to Mexican American

teams, but the segregation of public accommodations was a strong deterrent to integrated team play. Mexican Americans began to form their own baseball leagues. After the war, many Mexican American GIs were attracted to fast pitch softball. It was very competitive, but easier to play and fit into their community lives as they endeavored to reintegrate into the American mainstream while still maintaining their Latino identity. Wherever Mexican immigrants were recruited into labor intensive jobs in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, (agricultural work, railroad track building and maintenance, mining, smelter work, steel milling, and meat packing, to name a few), families permanently settled in communities where housing was provided by the employer. Later, they either rented or built homes in areas near their jobs. These communities maintained a strong sense of ethnic identity and pride. Since there were still remnants of discrimination after the war, the Mexican American



***Kansas City, Kansas Stateline Locos, 1948***

fast pitch softball leagues gave these communities and opportunity to unite around a favorite pastime and build a strong sense of unity.

The communities of Argentine, Amourdale, Rosedale, and the Bottoms, all in Wyandotte County, Kansas, were places that drew Mexican workers and their families. Kansas, like many other states in the Midwest, experienced a great influx of Mexican families largely due to the Mexican Revolution that raged in Mexico from 1910 to 1921. By 1910, 500,000 Mexican had crossed the international border to work mostly in Southwestern states primarily in agriculture and mining. By 1930, the number of Mexican workers had grown to over 1.5



million. Many of those workers were recruited by railroad companies, and the meat packing industries in Midwestern states. In Kansas, Union Pacific, Santa Fe, and Burlington Northern employed Mexicans to build and maintain the tracks, work as mechanics, and work in the ice plants for iced boxcars. These workers settled in town and cities all along the railroad lines. Some of those cities were included Wichita, Chanute, Emporia, Newton, Hutchinson, Florence and westward to Dodge City, Garden City, and Ulysses.

Mexican workers across the state obtained work in the slaughter houses and meatpacking plants of Wilson, Swift, Cudahy, and the Armour Meat Packing Company. These workers established residence around the meatpacking companies and raised their families in communities like the Argentine district and Armourdale, both in Kansas City, Kansas.

It was in these communities that Mexican families engaged in hard labor, but found time for family, friends, and entertainment. One form of entertainment is highlighted in a KCUR- FM Radio 89.3 program titled, "How Mexican-Americans In Kansas Built A Community Around Softball" by Zack Lewandowski.

In the broadcast, Lewandowski asserts that "During the early 20th century, Mexican Americans began migrating heavily into the Midwest, especially Kansas and parts of Missouri because of work on railroads like the Santa Fe. Projects were created to assimilate Mexican Americans to the United States' culture, and a key component was baseball."

Lewandowski continues, "It was a process that intrigued Kansas University professor Ben Chappell. He says the projects were intended to strip Mexican Americans of their 'distinctive ethnic identities', but that's not what happened. The sport became a community institution that people could invest with their own local identities, says Chappell. They were playing for the neighborhoods sometimes. So it really became their own institution. Even though Mexican Americans taught baseball, they often weren't allowed to play with whites or participate in tournaments. Softball began to catch on because it appealed to more skill levels and required less field space. And the community created their own tournaments, like the one in Newton, Kansas. There are Mexican-American communities in these places that were very tight-knit, Chappell says. One thing that people have told me in the research is that the tradition of softball tournaments gave them a great opportunity to go meet people with similar backgrounds in other parts of states."



***Kansas City, Kansas Azteca Team Road Trip to Omaha Tournament, circa, 1954***

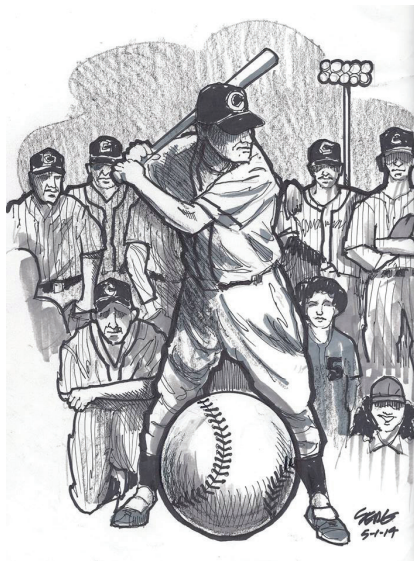
Enrique A. Chaurand, reporter for the Kansas City Star, wrote about the phenomena: Paul ("Pauly") Hernandez Jr. could have played softball in any league in Kansas City, but tradition, pride, and his community drew him to the fields where his father and other relatives once displayed their talents. For members of the Kansas City-area's Hispanic community, baseball and softball at McNally Park - formerly Shawnee Park - in Kansas City, Kansas, have been more than just a recreational activity. They've become part of their culture and a way of life. "I was raised with the game, and I knew that one day I'd be out on the same field that my dad played on," Hernandez said. "It's just tradition." But the tradition has deep roots. In 1924, Kansas City saw the emergence of the Aztecas, a baseball team composed of Hispanic players who played against other Hispanic teams. The squad would travel to play in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Illinois and Texas. "In those days they played against other Hispanic teams because they weren't allowed to play with White (opponents)," said John Campos, former player for the Aztecas and founder of the Kansas City Mexican-American Fast-Pitch Softball and Baseball Hall of Fame. The Aztecas won the first Mexican-American championship baseball tournament in Lyons, Kansas. "Baseball was a way of life to the members of Kansas City's Mexican communities," Campos said. "The old-timers still talk with emotion about the games, and the community took pride in its players" (*THE KANSAS CITY STAR*, METROPOLITAN SPORTS section, p.D6, 8/16/1996).

# MORE ON THE ART AND CULTURE OF BASEBALL

by Tomas Benitez

What is it about baseball that has always attracted artists and inspired art? It seems like from the beginning of the game, great poets and writers from Whitman to Lardner to Kinsella have endeavored to capture the drama of the sport. Painters have treated us to renderings and images of individual heroics and team victories on pastoral green fields or neighborhood sandlots. Black and white photos of legendary players and moments, such as The Babe, Willie Mays going back on the ball, or Sandy Koufax in his furious motion- all have become more like flat, iconic sculptures in their stoic beauty and timelessness. People who have no affinity of the game will still get misty at the end of "Field of Dreams" when Kevin Costner finally has that game of catch with his dad. Although, we can also cite Tom Hank's admonition in *A League of Their Own* "...there's no crying in baseball!" How many of you who are in no way big fans of the game still know the words Jack Norworth's 1972 song, "Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack, I don't care if I ever go back"- you know that last phrase, don't you? Baseball has been part of our culture for well over a hundred years and art has helped foster that condition.

The true acolyte of the game understands instinctively the connection of art to the culture of baseball. It is an imperfect yet beautiful game, like art itself, and the



**The Golden Age of Chicano Baseball**

creativity of baseball - its willingness to suspend time and often space, to serve as a popular metaphor to numerous aspects of human life - makes the game a natural for the creative mind to expand upon its facets as well as the impact of the game on our history, humanities, and indeed our culture.



**Vision on the Mound, Daniel Gonzalez**

In The Latino Baseball History Project, the emerging identity of an American life and the process of building community, particular in the Mexican American barrios, has been viewed through the lens of baseball. The game has proved to be an able conduit for us to explore larger themes. In doing so, the stories, images, and experiences that have been uncovered and finally brought to light have become treasures for everyone to share.

Latino artists and writers have weighed in with poetry, storytelling, and visual arts. When Fernando Valenzuela burst upon the scene in 1981, it was only a short time later when, overnight, a mural of his image appeared on an abandoned wall and stoop in Echo Park, created by the East Los Streetscapers. Like the giants of Mexican art who were painting the history of their nation for all the public to share, the Streetscapers were bannerizing the headline; a new force in the game was finally now on the scene. They painted what they knew, Fernando had arrived, and the game was now different, better. And so were we all.

Several generations of local artists and writers have come and gone throughout the years, each adding their insight and vision to our community and experience, which includes, of course, baseball. We have featured poetry and a few artworks in past issues, but over the next several editions we will be dedicating a page to explore The Latino Baseball History Project as told through our creative storytellers, the artists and writers.

Please submit your own writing and art for consideration to be included in future issues, and enjoy the first salvos of work from a handful of talented commentators who love the game, and tell their stories in the way they know best, through their creativity





(left side, front to back) Jose Alamillo, Teresa Santillan, Richard Santillan, Mark Ocegueda, Tomas Benitez  
(Right side, front to back) Margaret Salazar-Porzio, Magdalena Mieri, John Eschevest, Cesar Caballero, Sue Caballero

## Latino Baseball History Project Goes National

Since its inception, the co-founders, and now the Planning Committee, hoped and planned to take the Latino Baseball History Project from a local/regional scope to a national level. Our original plan was to collect oral histories, images, and artifacts of Mexican American players throughout the various regions of California; then, begin collecting in other states. Before the first book dealing with the history of players in other states came out (Alamo region in Texas), it seemed that the LBHP is headed to Washington, D.C., upon the invitation of the Smithsonian.

Dr. Richard Santillan, soon-to-be Dr. Mark Ocegueda, and Cesar Caballero were invited by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH) to participate in a panel discussion held in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 15, 2015. This event kick off a series of events designed to promote the creation of a nation-wide collection on Latino Baseball History. The multi-year project is called: "Latinos and Baseball: In the Barrios and the Big Leagues".

The first of several community collecting events is scheduled to take place in January of 2016 in San Bernardino, Calif., home of the Latino Baseball History Project. The NMAH plans to host 3-4 additional community events during 2016 and 2017 in order to build interest, expand the archive, and "bring collections to the national stage." (NMAH website). Plans also call for development of a traveling exhibit starting in 2020.

Earlier this year, members of the LBHP met with NMAH staff members in Los Angeles to discuss plans for the panel discussion in Washington and the proposed community event in San Bernardino, Calif.

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### MEXICAN AMERICAN BASEBALL IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Continued from Page 1

and players that dotted the San Fernando Valley landscape throughout the 20th century. In a time and place where Mexican Americans were closed off from many city recreation centers, neighborhoods formed their own teams. Baseball and softball reinforced community and regional ties, strengthened family bonds, instilled discipline and dedication that translated into future professional careers, provided women opportunities outside their traditional roles in the home, and fostered lifelong friendships. These photos serve as a lens to both local sports history and Mexican American history in San Fernando, Pacoima, North Hollywood, Burbank, Van Nuys, Chatsworth, Sunland-Tujunga, Reseda, Canoga Park, Glendale, and other nearby towns.

The coauthors are: Richard A. Santillán, professor emeritus of Ethnic and Women's studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Victoria C. Norton, former historical commissioner, city of San Fernando; Richard Arroyo, valley historian and former San Fernando city historical commissioner; Monica Ortez, public historian of Orange County; and Christopher Docter, graduate student, California State University, Northridge.

## A YOUNG MAN'S BASEBALL JOURNEY

By Rod Martinez

What do the Latino Baseball History Project, World War II, Wattisham Air Base in England, and Copeland, Kansas, have in common? The answer is Ramon Apolonio Martinez. Ramon was born in 1923 in the wheat farming town of Copeland where his Mexican immigrant parents, Nazario and Carmen, had settled from Jalisco. His father worked for the Santa Fe railroad and taught himself to read, write, and speak English and eventually became an American citizen.



*Wattisham Baseball Team,  
1944-1945*

His son, Ramon, was a gifted high school athlete in football, baseball, and basketball. Since, there were few Mexicans in this part of Kansas, Ramon and his brother Jesus were subject to racial insults, taunts, and even death threats, from opposing players. An opposing coach referred to them as the "two red hot chili peppers." Yet despite these racial and economic hardships, they overcame these obstacles. In 1938, while attending Copeland High School, Ramon became a semi-professional player with the Liberal, Kansas Blacksox of the Ban Johnson League.

In 1939, the Brooklyn Dodgers offered Ramon a contract for \$90 a month along with room and board. He turned down the offer because the Blacksox were paying him more and provided him a part-time job for extra income. In 1943, Ramon went to California looking for work during the Great Depression. In 1943, he volunteered for the U.S. Army Air Corp in Los Angeles. After several weeks of training, he was shipped out with the 434th Fighter Squadron of the 479th fighter group to Wattisham, England.

His unit immediately began flight operations against Hitler's Luftwaffe. Ramon helped form a baseball team and in 1945 the 434th/479th won the championship of the 65th fighter wing and was awarded a trip to Scotland. After the war, he married his high school sweetheart, Valeria. They had five children, Rod, Robert, Richard, Michael, and Christina.



*Ramon's Son, Roderick at Wattisham  
England Air Museum, May 2015*

In 2012, the Latino Baseball History Project honored Mexican Americans who had played ball in the military. The event was held at Cal Poly Pomona. Ramon's son, Rod, accepted the certificate of recognition on the behalf of the family. Ramon's military baseball photos have appeared in three of the Mexican American Baseball book series. Rod has sent copies of these three books along with the certificate to Mrs. Maggie Aggiss, the curator of the Wattisham Air Museum. The books and certificate are displayed in glass cases. In July of this year, Rod traveled to the museum to meet with Mrs. Aggiss and local residents, a handful of which are old enough to remember the American airmen who helped defend their nation against Nazism. Ramon passed away in 1990.

### A CALL FOR BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL PHOTOS FOR THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

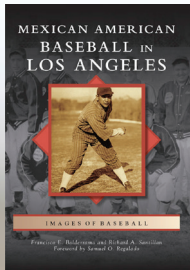
The Latino Baseball History Project is collecting vintage photographs of Mexican American baseball players for a future book, *Mexican American Baseball in the San Gabriel Valley*. The book is projected to be released in 2017. We need your generous help with photo donations so we can continue to document and record the history of Mexican American baseball. We prefer to include pictures from the mid-1800s all the way through the 1960s. This would include men's and women's baseball and softball teams - little leagues, summer leagues, industrial leagues, high schools, colleges, military, semi-professional & professional. The communities in the San Gabriel Valley would include: Alhambra, Altadena, San Marino, Pasadena, South Pasadena, Sierra Madre, Monterey Park, Montebello, Rosemead, San Gabriel, La Puente, El Monte, South El Monte, Bassett, Baldwin Park, Irwindale, Temple City, Covina, West Covina, Duarte, Azusa, Monrovia, Bradbury, Arcadia, San Dimas, La Verne, Walnut, Industry, Diamond Bar, and Glendora. If you need more information please contact James David Aguirre at:

Email: [james1966@verizon.net](mailto:james1966@verizon.net)

Cell#: (626) 665-6452

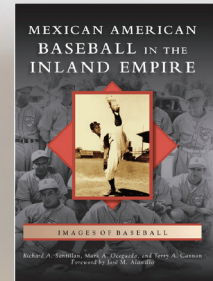


# Project News



**The Latino Baseball History Project** has now published seven books in less than five years, and there are many more to come! We congratulate all of the authors of these amazing books and especially the hundreds of people who have shared these incredible photos with the Project. Over 1,600 rare and vintage photos have been highlighted accompanied by extraordinary stories from coast to coast. Our book series, which first concentrated on California, has now moved to Texas and Kansas.

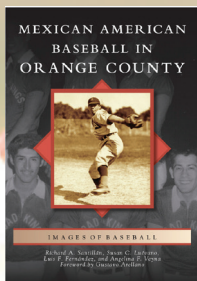
The Project is always looking for any type of baseball-themed photos for our book series; the time period is between the 1870s and 1960s. Even if photos are not included in our



books, they may appear in our newsletter, library exhibits, and they will definitely be a permanent part of our archives at the John M. Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino. Who knows? Your photos may be part of our future exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.!

The holidays are around the corner! These books will make great gifts for family and friends, and especially for children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. These books will be keepsakes for years to come, and educate the younger generations on the long and rich history of Mexican American baseball and softball in the United States. COLLECT THE ENTIRE SERIES for \$100 or \$20 a book !!!!

*Mexican American Baseball in Los Angeles* by Francisco E. Balderrama and Richard A. Santillan, foreword by Samuel O. Regalado (Feb. 21, 2011).



*Mexican American Baseball in the Inland Empire* by Richard A. Santillan, Mark A. Ocegueda, and Terry A. Cannon, foreword by José M. Alamillo (May 7, 2012)

*Mexican American Baseball in Orange County* by Richard A. Santillan, Susan C. Luevano, Luis F. Fernández, and Angelina F. Veyna, foreword by Gustavo Arellano (April 8, 2013).

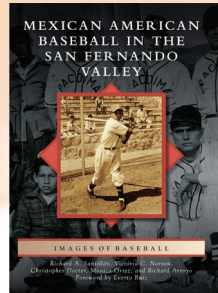
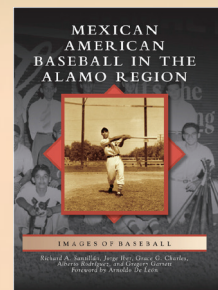
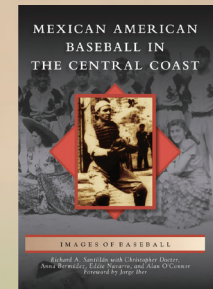
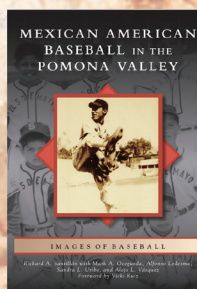
*Mexican American Baseball in the Central Coast* by Richard A. Santillan, Christopher Docter, and Anna Bermúdez, Eddie Navarro, Alan O'Connor, foreword by Jorge Iber (Dec. 9, 2013).

*Mexican American Baseball in the Pomona Valley* by Richard A. Santillan, Mark A. Ocegueda, Alfonso Ledesma, Sandra L. Uribe and Alejo L. Vasquez, foreword by Vicki Ruiz (Sept. 1, 2014).

*Mexican American Baseball in the Alamo Region* by Richard A. Santillan, Gregory Lyndon Garrett, Jorge Iber, Alberto Rodriguez and Grace Guajardo Charles, foreword by Arnoldo De León (July 20, 2015).

*Mexican American Baseball in the San Fernando Valley* by Richard A. Santillan, Victoria C. Norton, Christopher Docter, Monica Ortez, and Richard Arroyo, foreword by Everto Ruiz (Oct. 19, 2015).

For more information about purchasing the books and even discounts, please contact: Cesar Caballero [ccaballe@csusb.edu](mailto:ccaballe@csusb.edu) or Iwona Contreras [icontr@csusb.edu](mailto:icontr@csusb.edu), Library Administration (909)537-5102; or Richard Santillan [rsantillan@earthlink.net](mailto:rsantillan@earthlink.net).





# Mark Your Calendars - the LBHP has a full schedule this season!

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sunday NOV. 15 12-4 P.M at the Andres Pico Adobe  
10940 Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, CA 91345 (east corner at  
junction of Sepulveda and Brand Boulevards)

Sunday NOV. 22 12-4 P.M. at the Lopez Adobe  
1100 Pico St., San Fernando, CA 91340 (corner of Pico Street and MacLay  
Avenue)

Sunday Nov. 29 12-4 P.M. Richard & Teresa Santillan House  
2712 W. Ross Avenue, Alhambra, CA (626)375-9944

Saturday Dec. 5 12-4 P.M. Jim and Gloria Segovia  
1040 E. Del Mar Avenue, Orange, CA 92865

John M. Pfau Library  
Cal State San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA 92407



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Manager - \$250

Coach - \$100

Player - \$50

Membership

History Project

Latino Baseball