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Advertising the West: The History of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros

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Advertising the West: The History of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros

Since its launch in February 1925, the annual rodeo and parade of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros attracts both local Tucsonans and tourists yearning for a glimpse of southern Arizona's Wild West past. Philadelphian Frederick Leighton Kramer, a new resident of Tucson, envisioned the annual fiesta with the hopes of not only promoting Tucson but also sharing his newfound enthusiasm for its beauty and history. The history that Kramer and Tucson city boosters presented in the early years of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros centered around the Anglo-American pioneers of southern Arizona. This approach ignored the history of people who settled the area prior to its European colonization. However, the city boosters did not entirely exclude the history of local people in the festivities, but the limited involvement of Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans functioned more as a tool of cultural commodification than genuine inclusion.

When Tucson's top industries—agriculture and mining—began to decline in the early 1920s, city boosters looked for ways to promote Tucson and its surrounding areas to improve the local economy.¹ Marketed as the “sunshine city of America,” Tucson became a winter getaway for Anglo-Americans wanting to experience the Wild West and get a glimpse of local Native American and Mexican cultures. By capitalizing on the cultures of these local groups, Tucson city boosters enticed Eastern white Americans to visit the western city during the early twentieth century.²

¹ Alex Jay Kimmelman, “Luring the Tourist to Tucson: Civic Promotion During the 1920s,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 28, no. 2 (1987); 135.

² La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros was not the only event that commodified local Native American and ethnic Mexican cultures. Early twentieth century pamphlet advertisements promoted these cultures to entice Easterners to visit the Southwest. See the website [University of Arizona Library -- Special Collections Pamphlet and Travel Brochures -- Introduction \(ualibr-exhibits.s3-website-us-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](http://ualibr-exhibits.s3-website-us-west-2.amazonaws.com).

This paper will analyze the history of the creation of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros by examining its first parade, which kicked off its three-day festivities in February 1925, to understand the racialized complexities that permeated the events. Exploring how and why Leighton Kramer and his associates white-washed Tucson's history, this chapter will begin with a discussion of his fascination with the West, the sport of polo, and his need to make a name for himself in his newly acquired home of Tucson, Arizona. Going further, this section will examine the history of how the West was advertised to Anglo-Americans living in Eastern United States and how their financial gain came at the expense of Tucson's minoritized groups. Advertising the location's hot and dry climate for tuberculosis patients and exoticizing local Mexican and Native American cultures boosted Tucson's white American population. This chapter will argue that La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros promoted a white-washed history of southern Arizona to entice white Americans to visit and live in Tucson, while also minimizing the local cultures and history of ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans. Although advertised as a celebration of southern Arizona's history and the cowboy, La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros largely ignored its connection to the local Mexican and Native American cultures. Tucson tourism, as well as many other western cities, downplayed their Native American and Mexican history to promote a white American past filled with cowboys, pioneers, and a civilized European society.

The idea of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros began in 1922 with the University of Arizona's newly established polo team. In the same year, the university's Department of Military Science and Tactics began horse-riding and mounting classes, becoming a popular class among the university students. With the classes' growth, the students participated in horse shows and race meets, which led to the creation of the Riding and Polo Club in March 1922.³ The next year, the

³ University of Arizona Yearbooks, *The Desert*, 1922, University of Arizona Special Collections, Tucson, Arizona, (hereafter UASC).

Military Department's Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Parker began coaching the new polo team; they achieved immediate success.⁴ In 1923 the university's polo team won both the Southwest Collegiate Champions and the Pacific Collegiate Champions, and earned the West Collegiate Champions title the following year.⁵ These achievements captured the attention of local city boosters, including the Tucson Chamber of Commerce. Realizing the polo team's potential to market Tucson to tourists, the Tucson Chamber of Commerce requested financial support from its members and other local businessmen to boost the status of the polo team.⁶ Their enthusiasm for the sport's promotion not only stemmed from the successes of the University's polo team, but also from the sport's popularity among wealthy Anglo-Americans. Originating in Persia, now modern-day Iran, during the 6th century BCE, polo developed as an aristocratic sport. Before being introduced to the United States in 1876 by *New York Herald* publisher James Gordon Bennett Jr., polo became widely played throughout India and Europe and gained fame in military and academic circles. As the arrival of polo on the East Coast became a sudden trend among the new Anglo-American elite, West Coast city boosters saw the sport's potential in attracting wealthy Americans to the West.

Kramer, a polo enthusiast, also saw the potential in promoting the University's polo team. Knowing that the team lacked sufficient funds to travel to the National Collegiate Championship at Princeton in 1924, Kramer began to envision a Western-themed rodeo event in Tucson that would help fund the polo team. Kramer not only saw the potential of promoting the University's polo team and the sport itself, but Kramer also saw how much Tucson and its surrounding area attracted winter visitors. Hoping to escape the cold, snowy weather that bore down on the East

⁴ *The Desert*, 1922, UASC.

⁵ David F. Brinegar, Scrapbook Relating to The University of Arizona Polo Team, 1930-1933, UASC.

⁶ "Seven Colleges Enter Polo Match This Year," *The Yale Daily News* (New Haven, CT), May 18, 1925, 2.

Coast, many wealthy Easterners headed west to soak in the sun and warm temperatures. With the rodeo project in mind and the potential to entice more tourists to Tucson during the winter months, Kramer followed suit and organized the Arizona Polo Association of Tucson in December 1924 to publicize Arizona as the “winter capital of Polo.”⁷

Kramer and the Arizona Polo Association were not Tucson’s first promoters. Boosters started promoting Southern Arizona’s warm winter temperatures in the late nineteenth century mainly for health benefits, but later in the 1920s, expanded their efforts to attract winter tourists. During this time, local businessmen and organizations, like Tucson’s Chamber of Commerce, jumped on all opportunities that would provide Tucson the publicity needed to attract Anglo-American tourists and residents to grow the local economy. In September 1922, a large group of Tucson businessmen created Tucson Sunshine-Climate Club for the sole purpose of advertising the city as a winter getaway. The club “sought to attract ‘people of means,’ who could afford to remain throughout the entire winter season.”⁸ Becoming the main board for local tourism, the Sunshine-Climate Club strongly promoted Tucson as a prime vacation spot for Eastern visitors. By 1925, 174 magazines and newspapers displayed advertisements created by the Sunshine-Climate Club.⁹ Kramer may have seen such advertisements as he made Tucson his permanent home in 1923.

Frederick Leighton Kramer, a Philadelphia native, moved to Tucson in 1923 to seek a better climate for his declining health due to tuberculosis. In the United States during the late nineteenth century, tuberculosis quickly spread and killed many of its sufferers, leaving people desperate to escape its infection. Medical experts looked to the West for a cure, as the hot and

⁷ Kimmelman, “Luring,” 139; Geraldo L. Cadava, “La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros” in *Standing on Common Ground: The Making of a Sunbelt Borderland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 61.

⁸ Kimmelman, “Luring,” 136-138.

⁹ Kimmelman, “Luring,” 139.

dry climate that tormented the area was thought to cure tuberculosis patients and others with respiratory issues since the arid air would “dry out their lungs.”¹⁰ Many reputable health seekers made their way to the West, including infamous Tombstone gun fighter John H. “Doc” Holladay, American playwright Harold Bell Wright, and Leighton Kramer. However, most ill-affected people who headed West could only afford the train ticket to their destination and could not completely support their stay in the desert climates to gain their health back. In Tucson, these “lungers” established Tentville one mile north of the University of Arizona and continuously filled the dusty air with dry coughs and suffering. For a time, these poor and infected Americans hindered the economy of Tucson. Yet they also enabled Arizona to gain statehood in 1912, since these new city residents swelled its population to the minimum requirement for the territory to gain state recognition by the U.S. government.¹¹ For the territories of Arizona and New Mexico, adding Anglo-Americans to their population increased their chances of gaining statehood, as Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans made up most of the areas’ inhabitants. Congress held off on providing statehood to these territories as they believed ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans did not fully represent the American identity.

With such an explosive population increase of tuberculosis sufferers, local Tucsonans, including medical professionals, religious organizations, government groups, and concerned

¹⁰ Thomas Sheridan, *Arizona: A History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012), 238-239.

¹¹ Jennifer Levstik and Tyler Theriot, “Sanatoria Architecture in Tucson, Arizona, 1880—1945,” *Tucson Health Seekers: Design, Planning, and Architecture in Tucson for the Treatment of Tuberculosis* no. 1024 (2009): 134, 7-16. For more information about Arizona and New Mexico’s history of gaining statehood, see Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Linda C. Noel, “‘I Am an American’: Anglos, Mexicans, *Nativos*, and the National Debate over Arizona and New Mexico Statehood.” *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (2011): 430–67; Linda C. Noel, *Debating American Identity: Southwestern Statehood and Mexican Immigration* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014); Sean Parulian Harvey, “Derailed: Railroads, Social and Economic Change, and Transformations in the Natural and Built Environment in Tucson, Arizona, 1880–1920” (Utah State University, UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2013, 1547003).

citizens, established over 40 sanatoriums in and around Tucson throughout the 1920s, most catering to wealthy tuberculosis patients.¹² During this time Tucson continued to advertise itself as the perfect climatic city for health seekers, but changed its approach to advertising its sunny weather as an appeal to the increasing wealthy winter visitors from the East. These health advertisements that promoted Tucson's sunny weather must have appealed to Kramer. In the winter of 1923, Kramer traveled by train to Tucson to treat his tuberculosis and seek out warmer weather from the Philadelphia winters.

In April of that same year, Kramer purchased 160 acres of land northwest of the University of Arizona, adjacent to the famous Arizona Inn, founded by Isabella Greenway in 1930.¹³ On this land, Kramer built "a two-story marvel with green porcelain roofing tiles" in 1924, which he lived in with his wife until his death in 1930.¹⁴ This immense purchase of land and its proximity to the university allowed Kramer to become fully invested in promoting himself as a civic leader of Tucson. Kramer donated ten acres of this land to the University's polo team.

¹² According to Levstik and Theriot, over 20 of these sanatoriums were owned and operated by local Tucson women. Many local Tucson women, some being nurses, created their own organizations and opened their own sanatoriums to cater to the ailing men that came to Tucson seeking a cure for their tuberculosis. Although many of these men were married and tuberculosis slightly infected women more than men, most women stayed behind while their husbands traveled west. Even if these women also suffered from tuberculosis, many stayed behind to take care of their family. Also, medical experts advised women to not make the travels west as medical beliefs during the late nineteenth century stated women would become even more sick while traveling. Because many local women stepped up to take care of tuberculosis patients, they became more susceptible to contracting tuberculosis and ultimately many did contract the disease. Levstik and Theriot, "Sanatoria," 7-8; Sheridan, *Arizona*, 240-241.

¹³ Isabella Greenway served as Arizona's first congresswoman in 1932 and was an affluent businesswoman throughout Arizona. In 1927, Greenway created the Arizona Hut, a furniture store in downtown Tucson that employed local World War One veterans. Although the store quickly became immensely popular, employing almost one hundred veterans and selling their merchandise to famous companies like Abercrombie & Fitch in New York, the business declined by 1929 largely because of the Great Depression. To aid the business, Greenway purchased much of the furniture herself. To continue aiding her business and the veterans, she decided to open the Arizona Inn and use Arizona Hut to supply its furniture. Arizona Inn quickly gained national fame as a place for wealthy Americans and celebrities to vacation; Greenway's good friend Eleanor Roosevelt and her husband, Franklin Delano Roosevelt stayed at Arizona Inn often. Many La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros guests stayed at the Arizona Inn as the rodeo grounds was adjacent to the Inn until 1932 when it moved south of Tucson. Will Conroy, *Arizona Inn: A History* (2013), 23.

¹⁴ Tom Beal, "Rodeo Creator's Home Set for Demolition," *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, AZ), February 28, 2015.

That land, Santa Catalina Fields, would also become the main arena for the annual rodeo of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros until 1930, when it moved a few miles south of Tucson. Once an uncleared piece of desert land, the rodeo committee fitted part of the donated ten acres with stables, a water tank, and grandstand seating that could hold 3,000 spectators. Altering such an arid landscape required an immense amount of money. Although Kramer happily donated some of his land to the rodeo event, the finances for such a project quickly increased as the construction of the stables alone cost \$10,000. To help with such investments, the rodeo's finance committee solicited financial assistance from local Tucsonans, with sixty Tucsonans each providing \$250 to the project's budget.¹⁵ Nothing could stop Kramer and his fellow associates from forming one of the biggest rodeo events of the West. His passion for polo, his immense fondness for Tucson and its potential to expand in popularity and size, and his devotion to becoming a well-respected Tucsonan, all combined in Kramer's promotion of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros.

According to historian Lawrence Culver, promoting the West became a common effort among organizations, local governments, and even individual people who sold "one region or another to make money, and sometimes because they had also become fervent believers in the city or region they championed."¹⁶ Along with his fellow business partners and other Western city boosters, Kramer promoted the new cities they now called home for the purpose of attracting wealthy, white Americans from the Eastern United States. Southern California exemplified this ideal of promoting leisure activities for Eastern white, middle-class Americans and provided the structure for other Western towns to follow. Thought of as free land for European Americans, the

¹⁵ Kimmelman, "Luring," 142; "Annual Show is Committee Idea for Tucson Fete," *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, AZ), February 21, 1925.

¹⁶ Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-4.

Western frontier became a place of new beginnings. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner epitomized the West as land of limitless opportunities for Americans which he laid out in his Frontier Thesis in 1893. Like Turner, many Americans viewed the West as a place of opportunity that offered “a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness, and confidence, and scorn of older society.”¹⁷ Although geared toward Anglo-Americans, the limitless possibilities and individualism that the West offered attracted newly arrived international immigrants as well. All ventured west seeking work, religious and political freedom, and a new way of life that the bustling East Coast could no longer offer. Yet, as Easterners wanted to get away from the overcrowded and polluted East, they also wanted to escape the rapid population growth of Black Americans, Southern European immigrants, and other ethnic groups moving into urban spaces.¹⁸

In the West, ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans dominated the area long before colonization and continued to live in the area once Anglo-Americans began moving west. The influx of other ethnic groups moving to the West, such as Chinese and Black Americans, added to this mix.¹⁹ Unable to escape the saturation of these groups residing in the West, white American city boosters became invested in promoting the West through various methods, like leisure activities, with the hopes of diminishing the growth of diverse communities and minimizing the visibility of pre-existing Indigenous groups. In his historical analysis of Los Angeles’ suburban growth during the early twentieth century, historian Eric Avila found that Southern California’s distance from Europe and its well-known Spanish history aided in the

¹⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” American Historical Association. Chicago World’s Fair, Chicago, Ill., 12 July 1893, 9.

¹⁸ For more information about white flight and segregation in the West throughout the twentieth century, see Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁹ Culver, *The Frontier*, 3-9.

appropriation of Mexican culture and other minoritized groups. Avila states that “the promotion of Los Angeles during the Progressive era reflected a racial project that rendered the city’s Spanish and Mexican past as a touristic fantasy packaged for mass consumption and targeted the city’s racial and ethnic groups as candidates for either total assimilation or outright exclusion.”²⁰ Specifically for Tucson, as previously highlighted, these tourist packages included advertising cities for their health benefits, adding polo to Western leisure activities, and creating white-washed historical festivities, such as La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros.

Tourism became a necessity for cities to attract Eastern Anglo-Americans to visit their city, partake in their leisure attractions, add to the region’s economy, and hopefully make the city their permanent home. The February 1926 publication of *Progressive Arizona*, a journal co-founded by Leighton Kramer in 1925, established such an objective. In the first few pages of the magazine, the Arizona Polo Association of Tucson created a list of objectives for the purpose of continuing to promote and annually host La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros. One objective includes, “making a winter playground for [Tucson’s] visitors, and thus offering them an inducement to come and live here.”²¹ Not everyone could play in this winter playground. Tucson’s landscape became a leisure lifestyle for white tourists and a workspace for its ethnic Mexican population. Though exclusion wasn’t as obvious in Tucson as it was in southern States, many Blacks, Indigenous, Mexicans, and Chinese could not take part in many of these ventures due to financial barriers.

Advertisements, especially magazines like *Progressive Arizona*, that promoted the West solely aimed at attracting wealthy white Americans while neglecting the possible damaging

²⁰ Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 24.

²¹ Leighton Kramer, “La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros:’ The Annual Midwinter Rodeo,” *Progressive Arizona* Vol. 2. No. 2 (Feb 1926); 2.

consequences for other racial groups. As Culver points out, “Southern California was created as a place of white leisure dependent upon the labor of people of color.”²² Even as minoritized groups largely worked for pay for the sake of white American entertainment, others found themselves caught up in the promotional world of cultural exhibitions. As Culver further elaborates, “Mexican Americans and Native Americans, in particular, were expected to play roles in a fictionalized and romanticized version of regional history.”²³ That phenomenon was not limited to southern California. Native and Mexican Americans embodied those narratives in other cities throughout the West, such as Santa Fe and Tucson. City boosters exoticized local Native Americans, and to a lesser extent its ethnic Mexican cultures, to promote the West to white Americans. Although Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans were, and still are, active members in these cities, Anglo-Americans attempted to control the present and future of these groups by exclusively envisioning and promoting them as quaint relics of the past. Tourism transformed these groups into objects of history rather than subjects.

Even with the impediments of staging their past and present, ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans attempted to alter this control. An example of this includes protesting the discriminatory working conditions in agriculture and mining throughout Southern Arizona during the early 1920s. Beginning in 1920, ethnic Mexicans began to protest for their right to gain satisfactory pay and better positions in these industries. As most ethnic Mexicans who worked these jobs were citizens of Mexico, and thus immigrants of the United States, they constantly faced discrimination and biases, as their immigration status automatically rendered them vulnerable. Although white Americans strongly believed in this stereotype and other demeaning labels of Mexicans, the Arizona State Federation of Labor (ASFL) supported these

²² Culver, *The Frontier*, 9.

²³ Culver, *The Frontier*, 9.

protests of Mexican laborers. This deceptive support from the ASFL stemmed from the ideologies that Mexican laborers would significantly corrupt the American beliefs of Anglo laborers. According to an editorial in the *Arizona Labor Journal* published in 1920, “American labor must either lift the Mexican laborer somewhere close to its own standards or it would be dragged down to the level which the cotton companies have attempted to establish for this farm labor, which is an unthinkable condition.”²⁴

ASFL organizer John Bratton, who did not support the protests of Mexican laborers, believed that Mexicans deterred Anglo-Americans from reaching his ambitions of progress and providing for his family. Because many Mexicans came to work in the United States alone without their families, white American laborers assumed Mexican laborers neglected the patriarchal role of financially supporting their family. According to Rachel St. John in her book *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.—Mexico Border*, when “more Mexican immigrants arrived in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s, they not only became incorporated into this racial hierarchy, but also reinforced Americans’ characterization of Mexicans as poor, uneducated, unsanitary, and racially inferior. People of Mexican descent were relegated to low-wage, unskilled jobs and substandard housing and government services.”²⁵ Like John Bratton, many other white Americans believed that Mexican labor “threatened the independence and manhood of the family farmer . . . He supposedly lacked the character necessary to become a good citizen-worker.”²⁶ Even with some support from the ASFL, other

²⁴ Eric V. Meeks, *Border: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 111.

²⁵ Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.—Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 182.

²⁶ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 113.

members continued to clutch the mythical stereotypes of ethnic Mexicans and their protests for better wages and positions failed to gain traction.²⁷

These stereotypes did not stay within the labor force or solely among ethnic Mexicans; they crossed racial, social, and national status. Stereotypes were nothing new and led to many racialized groups strongly detesting one another without solid proof. Such stereotypes stemmed from the unknown that the frontier of the West created, which permeated as rumors among curious Easterners. According to historian Manu Karuka, rumors were “important circuits for the reproduction of paranoid fantasies of racial supplantation, whether by Indigenous nations, racial aliens, or others.”²⁸ Rumors justified fear in colonizers, which granted them the authority to enact discriminatory laws and ultimately violence on these communities. In Los Angeles during the nineteenth century, rumors about violent mobs of Mexicans and local Native Americans attacking the Anglo population rapidly spread among newcomers of the area, provoking vigilantes who then went on violent, sometimes deadly, sprees. With this knowledge, Karuka found that rumors led colonizers “to a sort of democratic possibility, a shared claim to ownership that could simultaneously allow for and preserve hierarchy and social difference within the community, while delineating boundaries and borders for who was included.”²⁹ The creation of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros exemplified this phenomenon in Tucson as its festivities catered to the attraction of visiting wealthy, white Americans while tying in its local ethnic Mexican and Native Americans through cultural appropriation and stereotypes. Ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans of Tucson encountered the effects that rumors, and paranoid fantasies, endorsed as

²⁷ Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 113.

²⁸ Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 3-11.

²⁹ Karuka, *Empire's Tracks*, 5.

they added to the fear and resentment for white Americans to justify discriminatory rules and racism.

Such stereotypes and racist attacks against ethnic Mexicans “blurred the lines between nativism and racism, targeting people of Mexican descent sometimes on the basis of their race, sometimes because of their immigration status, but more often than not because of some combination of the two.”³⁰ Tucson’s proximity to the Mexican border, sixty-six-miles North of Nogales, Sonora, added to the stereotypes and rumors that permeated the minds of white Americans living in southern Arizona. The U.S./Mexico border “became shaped primarily not by those who lived along and moved across it, but more often by distant politicians and national ideas of racial and national differences.”³¹ With the border line becoming physically marked by the United States government and the Mexican government beginning in 1849 came a power that further forced the divide between both countries, and Anglo-Americans and ethnic Mexicans. White Americans of southern Arizona began to detest Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, as they believed their advancement in the United States further caused the “Mexicanization of the Southwest.”³²

Even before Frederick Jackson Turner published his thesis, a treatise that justified white American’s exploitation of the frontier and its resources, tall tales of the West generated rumors and fears in the minds of white Americans during the nineteenth century. Historian Louis Warren analyzed the tall tales of William “Buffalo Bill” Cody—which Buffalo Bill wrote mostly about himself—and found that those stories of tough, daring individuals who supposedly conquered the unknown frontier eventually created many rumors and stereotypes of the West and its

³⁰ St. John, *Line*, 182.

³¹ St. John, *Line*, 197.

³² Meeks, *Border Citizens*, 114.

minoritized population. During the nineteenth century, tall tales became forms of advertisements, quickly gaining popularity among many, painting a fictionalized world of the West that became reality in the minds of its audience. These tall tales not only scared Americans and newly arrived immigrants, but at the same time, these forms of advertisements coaxed its audience to venture West for better financial opportunities. During the mid-nineteenth century, documented accounts from travelers who already ventured West, dime novels, and even rumors “coursed a powerful theme of democratic exploration, less of the travel itself—which was well marked even before the gold rush—than of the spaces between western reality and eastern fantasy.”³³ With these tall tales, paranoid fantasies, and rumors, the West became a place of racial exploitation for the purpose of catering to the financial and leisure pleasures of white Americans.³⁴

Just like Buffalo Bill and other early heroic Western individuals, Kramer fictionalized the history of southern Arizona to create an illusion of white supremacy for himself and the Southwest. In *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past*, historian William Deverell argues that the behavior of white Americans towards ethnic Mexicans in Los Angeles were racially motivated and further contributed to racist stereotypes of Mexicans, such as claiming ethnic Mexicans to be dirty and “sleepy.” These behaviors and perceptions aided the growth of Los Angeles both financially, through tourism, and demographically, publicly advertising to white Americans while also seeking cheap labor from Mexicans and other groups. It also helped white Americans re-make the Mexican past.³⁵ Creating a rodeo and parade supposedly based in Mexican and Spanish yet minimizing and

³³ Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 71.

³⁴ Culver, *The Frontier*.

³⁵ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

excluding the history of local Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans people, Kramer and his fellow associates created an illusion that catered to the Western fantasies that Easterners yearned to see. Catering to these fantasies further added to the stereotypes and rumors that discriminated against ethnic Mexicans and Native Americans of Tucson and southern Arizona.

Kramer's rendition of the history of southern Arizona depicts an Anglo-American vision, which he wrote in the first official program of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros. His short note reminded contestants and spectators:

“Not so many years ago the first pony express came to a sudden halt on our Main Street, carrying civilization southwestward. Not so many years ago the first railroad train whistled in. Gone is the past. The hitching post has been removed. A new civilization has put steel and concrete and built a mighty city where only yesterday horses grazed, within the memory of living man.

The Pioneer Spirit lives. Heroic memories never die. The Old Frontier will be revived at Tucson, February 21, 22, and 23, 1925—as a community revival.

The old west never knew a range show. The old events were contests—skill, endurance and speed conquered. We are proud to offer this attraction to the people of America—both contestants and spectators—as a glorious reminder of yesterday.”³⁶

When Kramer envisioned the events of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, he envisioned the Western days of Anglo cowboys, riding horses and defending themselves from Native Americans. As noted in the statement above, the theme of the annual rodeo event was that of the pioneer days of southern Arizona, when Anglo-Americans claimed Tucson and its surrounding areas as their own, neglecting its current inhabitants. Unbeknownst to some if not most of the program's readers, Kramer wrote an obvious historical error in his statement. Kramer wrote “the first pony express came to a sudden halt on our Mainstreet” even though it is historically noted that the pony express, an American mail service that traveled between Missouri to California from 1860

³⁶ *Annual Rodeo-La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros* official rodeo program, February 21, 1925, AHSA.

to 1861, never traveled to Tucson, let alone in any part of Arizona. To include this outrageously false claim and yet not include Tucson's Indigenous, Mexican, or even Spanish history shows that La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros was created to rewrite local history into an American, a white American, narrative.

On February 21, 1925, Leighton Kramer and fellow members of the Arizona Polo Association of Tucson began the city's first three-day rodeo event. The Arizona Polo Association believed the rodeo events would gain Tucson national publicity, like annual festivities in Cheyenne and Pendleton. They hoped the name, La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, would become as popular as Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Tournament of Roses in Pasadena.³⁷ These fantasies seemed to have come to fruition as Tucson's first winter-rodeo festivities drew such an enormous crowd of tourists that Tucson did not have an adequate number of hotels and rooms to accommodate these guests. The immediate purchases of both parking spaces and grandstand seating at the Santa Catalina Fields added to the panic of inadequate temporary housing for Tucson's guests.³⁸ On February 19, 1925, the *Tucson Citizen* published a piece that urged Tucsonans to open their homes and rent out any spare space to temporarily house the overflow of visitors. The local office of the Southern Pacific Railroad even requested temporary use of Pullman sleeper cars to house the hundreds of expected rodeo guests. The promise of guests from Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, and other Eastern states validated the vision of making La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros nationally known for winter tourists and rodeo enthusiasts. Kramer saw this as "conclusive evidence that the frontier spirit [was] not dead, but merely in need of rejuvenation, and that the old days of the West still live in the hearts of all true Americans."³⁹

³⁷ Kramer, "La Fiesta," 11-15.

³⁸ "Railway Asked for Available Sleeping Cars for Emergency," *Tucson Citizen* (Tucson, AZ), February 19, 1925.

³⁹ Kramer, "La Fiesta," 11.

Kramer and his associates hoped that a three-day rodeo celebration would rejuvenate Tucson's frontier spirit. But as noted, this celebration did not include Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans, the people whose ancestors lived in the place that the rodeo promoters were trying to re-invent. Distorting local Native American history allowed city boosters to promote these colonized places to Anglo-Americans. To allow these visions to become reality, historian Hal Rothman argues that places centered around tourism are scripted spaces "to keep visitors at the center of the picture while simultaneously cloaking, manipulating, and even deceiving them into believing that their experience is the locals' life, reality, and view of the world."⁴⁰ Yet instead of completely ignoring the history of local native groups, Western city boosters exoticized these groups, especially Native American cultures. According to Deverell in *Whitewashed Adobe*, "Los Angeles matured, at least in part, by covering up places, people, and histories that those in power found unsettling."⁴¹ Like Tucson, Kramer and other Western city boosters promoted a white-washed history that minimized the past and present contributions of local native people. Boosters wanted to appeal to the tourists' exoticized fantasy of the past rather than the reality of dispossession.

Rothman finds that "tourism offers its visitors romanticized visions of the historic past, the natural world, popular culture, and especially of themselves."⁴² The festivities of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros encapsulated these tourism ideals as its creation became essential for Tucson boosters to establish as an attempt to not only gain national fame but also to attract Anglo-Americans, both for financial benefits and more white American residents. Thus, Tucson city boosters created La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros for the intention of attracting wealthy Anglo-

⁴⁰ Rothman, "Tourism," 103.

⁴¹ Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 7.

⁴² Hal Rothman, "Tourism in the Modern West" in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, ed. by David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 103.

Americans, which was done by appropriating local Native American cultures and ethnic Mexicans. This was most evident in the parade, which kicked off the festivities on the morning of February 21, 1925.

Organizers scheduled the first winter-rodeo event as two parades: one on Saturday morning to open the festivities and the other on Monday morning to close the rodeo events. Both parades commenced in downtown Tucson on the corner of south Scott Street and proceeded to Kramer's newly purchased Santa Catalina Fields, a few miles east of downtown. With ten acres of this land donated to house the rodeo grounds and the University's polo field, parade participants, most on horseback, marched east from the city center to the Northeast corner of the University of Arizona. Underestimating the length of the almost four-mile distance from downtown to the Santa Catalina Fields, many of the walking parade participants grew exhausted throughout the parade's route. Even though many of the participants, including the contestants of the rodeo events who were expected to participate in the parade, were mounted on horses, sat on board carriages, and other means of transportation, other participants chose to walk the route. The Arizona Polo Association of Tucson arranged to have extra horses available for locals to rent if they wanted to participate in the parade and join the rodeo festivities on horseback.

Although the rodeo was the main attraction for La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, locals and tourists swarmed downtown Tucson to view the opening parade, which began around 10:30AM on Saturday, February 21, 1925. The downtown crowds lined themselves around the downtown shops but understandably spilled into the streets as the wooden sidewalks could not hold the throngs of paradegoers. Even though downtown was the ideal spot for the parade route—Tucsonans and tourists spent much of their time downtown as it was the city's main spot for entertainment and shopping—its sidewalks proved to be too small a space to accommodate the

overabundance of locals and guests. Still, the parade went on as planned as Tucson police managed the crowd to prevent them from getting in the way of the parade line. The parade included an assortment of contestants, such as the Twenty-fifth Infantry Band from Nogales playing cheerful tunes, the revered University polo team mounted atop horses waving to a joyful array of spectators, and the crowd favorite Lone Wolf donned his breath-taking Blackfoot traditional attire and feathered headdress. The city's sheriff, a group of Navajos, and other contestants, embodied Kramer's view of Tucson's present and past. According to Kramer and the rodeo parade committee members, the parade told its spectators the story of Tucson's community and was ultimately a "credit to the Old Pueblo."⁴³ With many dressed in Western attire, both parade contestants and its spectators, Tucson's guests—and its newly arrived residents like Kramer—must have understood the parade as a commemoration to the American cowboy, a western hero of pre-industrialization.⁴⁴

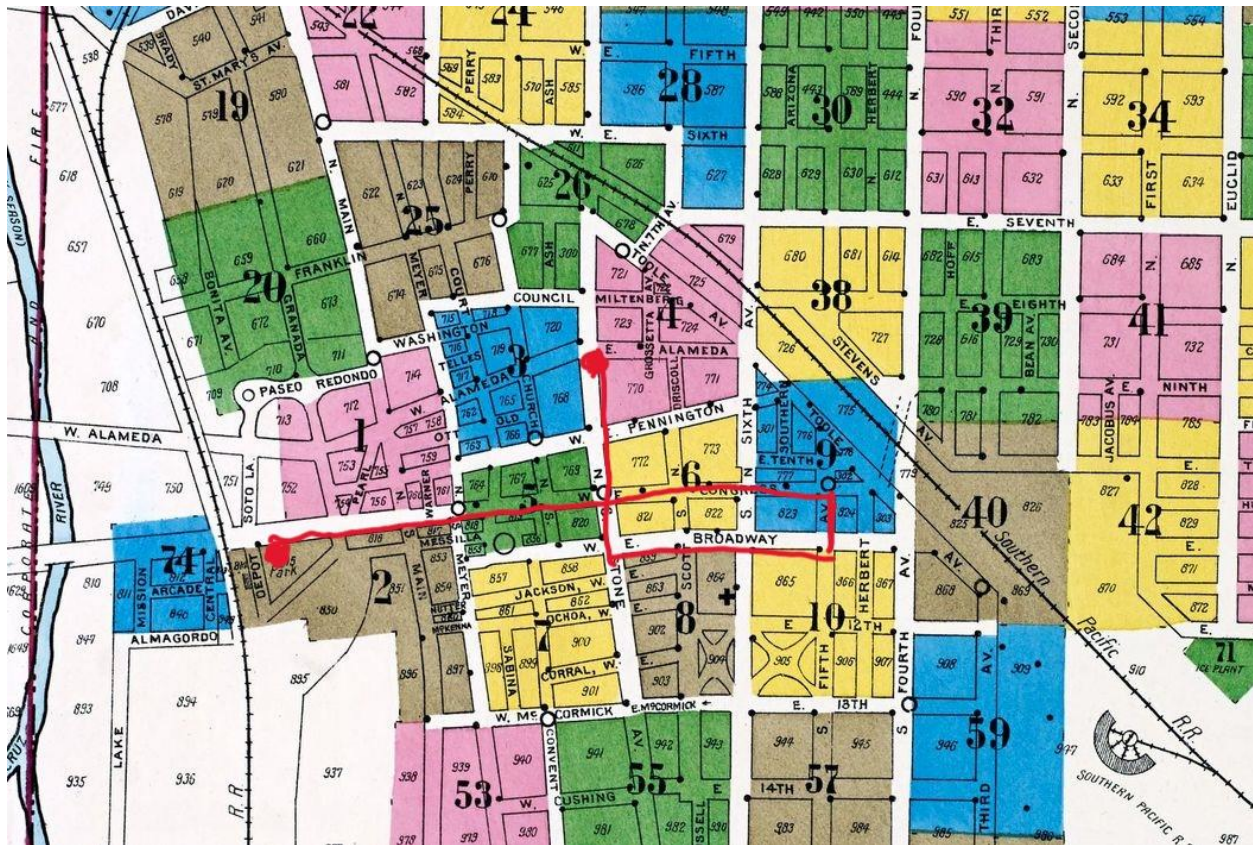
Even if Kramer and Tucson boosters created this event to entice white Americans and showcase a white-washed history, all were allowed to be parade spectators, including Tucson's Mexican population. The parade audience—families, children, tourists—flooded into the street, necessitating patrols by local police and special deputies to ensure the streets retained enough room for the parade line to continue.⁴⁵ The parade was the first chance for its committee members to entice Tucson visitors with the committee members' version of Tucson's past. The Arizona Polo Association of Tucson mainly hoped to "re-establish in the minds of the people, the typical cowboy and ranch atmosphere."⁴⁶ In fact, the cowboy and cowgirl played major

⁴³ Kramer, "Fiesta," 13; Kimmelman, "Luring," 143.

⁴⁴ Note that the term "American cowboy" refers to cowboys that identified themselves, or identified by others, as white Americans. Although the term American can refer to anyone who is a citizen of the United States, historians and others linked the term American to signify people of European descent.

⁴⁵ "Great Parade Today Starts Off Initial Fiesta of Cow-Boys," *Citizen* (Tucson, AZ), February 20, 1925, 2.

⁴⁶ Kramer, "La Fiesta," 11.



1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Tucson, Pima County, Arizona. Provided by: Library of Congress, Washington, DC. According to *The Citizen*, the parade route covered “the entire length of Congress Street, from [the] park to Fifth. The march [continued] south on Fifth Avenue to Broadway: west on Broadway to Stone, and north on Stone to Alameda, where the paraders [disbanded].” “West Contributes Best Riders for Tucson’s First Rodeo and Classis Thrills are Promised,” *Citizen* (Tucson, AZ), February 20, 1925, 2.

characters throughout the festivities as the first program of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros made it aware that the rodeo was “not only a contest but an exhibition displaying the skill of Cowboys and Cowgirls to the public.” Cash prizes were given out to the best-looking typical cowboy and cowgirl costume during both parades, and a cowboy dance occurred on Saturday evening.⁴⁷

According to Kramer, the parade was “replete with Western pageantry. Picturesque and colorful were the gaudy costumes of cowboy and cowgirl.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ To continue with the cowboy theme, the first Annual Rodeo pamphlet playfully added the phrase “come and get it, cowboy,” when referencing how the contestants would be awarded for their win with a cash prize. *Annual Rodeo-La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros*, February 21, 1925, AHSA.

⁴⁸ Kramer, “La Fiesta,” 13.

Even with this cowboy spirit as the major theme of the festivities, Kramer and the festival committee members sought to showcase a glimpse of local Native American and Mexican cultures in the parade for the sake of appealing to white American tourists. The most popular contestant in the parade, noted as such by its consistent mention in published articles about the event, was Lone Wolf, a Blackfoot Indian chieftain and artist. His eye-catching appearance and costume, inherited from his grandfather, Chief Yellow Wolf, stole the show. Lone Wolf was adorned with a flowing feathered headdress, jacket, and leggings “of purest white doeskin, heavily embroidered in beads of many colors . . . [and] from the fringed belt [hung] countless scalp locks taken from enemy tribes.”⁴⁹ Such an elaborate costume won Lone Wolf a cash prize for being “Best All-Round Indian.”⁵⁰ Surely Lone Wolf was a sight to see for the parade spectators. A group of Navajos rode through the parade, which was also noted in many written articles covering the parade and the rodeo events. Even with such Native American representation, none reflected the local Indigenous groups; Tohono O’odham or Pascua Yaqui tribes.⁵¹ Lone Wolf represented the Blackfoot tribe with their homelands in Montana, and although the Navajo group represented Arizona, their reservation is approximately three hundred miles North of Tucson.

Although American cowboys are a significant part of southern Arizona’s past, they play a smaller role than other groups of the area, which were hardly showcased during the entire event

⁴⁹ “Great Parade,” 2.

⁵⁰ There were also cash prizes given out for Best Papago Indian, Roberto Garcia, and Best Navajo Indian, “man who carried boy on back, no name, no number,” “Here is List of Prizes in Rodeo Parade,” *Citizen* (Tucson, AZ), February 22, 1925, 3.

⁵¹ The Pascua Yaqui did not become a Federally recognized tribe until the 1970s. They derive from the Rio Yaqui group, whose homelands extend from Tucson to Sonora, Mexico with much of their homelands in Mexican territory. Because of this, the U.S. government did not see the tribe as a Native American group and Pasqua Yaquis were constantly denied federal recognition. Even though they were not federally recognized in 1925, I am still using their current name because they were a local Indigenous group in Tucson, even if not federally recognized. Meeks, *Border Citizens*.

of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros. Mexicans and local Native Americans; Tohono O’odham, Apache, and Pascua Yaqui peoples, have long cultivated and lived on the land that designates the city of Tucson. These groups have also aided in the formation of modern-day Tucson not only through labor, but significantly through cultural influences that are evident in Tucson’s architecture, re-developed landscape, and even its food.⁵² The Yaqui, Hohokam, and other Indigenous peoples once lived and traveled throughout Tucson and its surrounding areas with their homelands expanding into Sonora, Mexico.⁵³ But once Spanish and white Americans wandered into southern Arizona, their descendants—Pasqua Yaqui and Tohono O’odham nations—became unwanted citizens. Tucson’s Native American population became a nuisance for Tucson’s new locals who built their environment on land already used by its Indigenous population. As in the rest of the Native American population in the United States during colonization, assimilation, mistreatment, and even death led to the disruption of Tucson’s local tribes; the federal government placed the Tohono O’odham nation on a reservation southwest of Tucson. With most of the Native American population out of the way and prejudice barring ethnic Mexicans and even ethnic Chinese from partaking in Tucson’s attractions, Tucson could become a home for white Americans to play without fear.

As one of the few Native Americans to walk in the parade, Lone Wolf became an object of exoticism, captivating the gaze of his spectators and unknowingly providing them with a sense of historical understanding of Native Americans. Lone Wolf, whose given name was Hart Merriam Schultz, was already well known among many white Americans, including painter

⁵² Many of Tucson’s architecture has been influenced by Spanish culture, such as the use of adobe brick, which consists of mud and straw. During the late nineteenth century, adobe structures were seen as eyesores by many Anglo-American guests and new residents of Tucson since it was attached to Mexico and had negative connotations, such as being dirty and uncomfortable for living quarters.

⁵³ Today, Tucson is home to the Tohono O’odham (Hohokam descendants) reservation and the Pasqua Yaqui (Rio Yaqui descendants, also known as Papago) reservation.

Thomas Moran, Theodore Roosevelt, and Buffalo Bill Cody. At the age of eleven, Lone Wolf began sketching artwork for his father James Willard Schultz, a famous author of Native Americans and Blackfeet history. Lone Wolf became popular in the art scene because of his paintings and sculptures depicting Blackfeet life. Even with his proximity to whiteness from his father, Lone Wolf lived with his mother's family on the Blackfoot reservation in Montana. Though both his mother and grandmother instilled in Lone Wolf that he "will have to follow the White Man's way so it is best to learn how to make a living right here."⁵⁴ Even if Lone Wolf was particularly proud to be displayed wearing his grandfather's attire among white Americans in the parade of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, his role aided in the exoticism and commodification of Native Americans. According to scholar Leah Dilworth, "the tourist is always the subject, the receiver of information; the Indian is always the object of the gaze, a commodity to be consumed visually."⁵⁵ While rubbing elbows with prominent white Americans, Lone Wolf played into the staged authenticity and tourist industry of Tucson by walking in the parade of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros.

Lone Wolf's story represents other Native American experiences in the tourist industry. Scholar Katherine Phillips' analysis of an annual apple festival near her hometown in northern Wisconsin illustrates this dynamic. As a tribal member of the Red Cliff Ojibwe and raised on its reservation, Phillips found that the tourism industry aided in the local economy of the tribe, and at the same time, exploited the people and their culture. Phillips states that "From New York to California, as early as the 1900s and continuing today, enterprising towns have used narratives of

⁵⁴ Paul Dyck, "Lone Wolf Returns to that Long Ago Time," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Winter, 1972), pp. 18-41; 27.

⁵⁵ Leah Dilworth, "Tourists and Indians in Fred Harvey's Southwest," in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, ed. by David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 158.

American Indian history as the basis for dramatic, tourist-centered performances.”⁵⁶ Seen as a type of souvenir, Native American and Mexican cultures became an attraction for tourism that not only accommodated white American tourists’ self-discovery, but also greatly added to the economy of towns and organizations which commodified local marginalized groups. In the article “Tourists and Indians in Fred Harvey’s Southwest,” Dilworth utilizes Dean MacCannell’s concept of “staged authenticity” to examine the history of the Fred Harvey Company and how they commodified local Southwest Native Americans for advertising purposes in conjunction with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway. Dilworth shows that the Harvey Company altered Native American history to cater to their tourists’ need of self-discovery. For this to occur, tourists saw Native Americans as people stuck in the past. The Harvey Company portrayed them as submissive and “good Indians” so that tourists, almost always white Americans, could feel comfortable stepping back into what they imagined as premodern, American times.

These types of experience were particularly satisfying for Easterners who were able to live the tall tales and rumors of the West and its Native American population they had witnessed in movies, plays, and dime novels. The appropriation of local Native American cultures, and to a lesser extent Mexican culture, enabled tourists to gain historical knowledge and experiences that differentiated them from the people back East. Many Easterners would return home and tell their acquaintances of their learned knowledge and lived experiences, seemingly placing them at a higher level of wealth due to their travels.⁵⁷ Vacationing in the West, experiencing its unique offerings, and believing to have achieved an understanding of its native people allowed Anglo-

⁵⁶ Katherine M. Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 5.

⁵⁷ Dilworth, “Tourists and Indians,” 149.

Americans to gain unwarranted self-confidence. This confidence gave them the authority to overpower the West, its landscape, and the people who inhabited its spaces long before European colonization. Emboldened by their sense of entitlement, they asserted economic and political dominance and took control over cities, even where they were newcomers.

Even while the United States government forced assimilationist measures on Native Americans to strip them of their cultural identity and traditions through various tactics, such as mandating reservations and imposing assimilationist educational programs on their children, Anglo-Americans continued to consume nostalgic images of Native Americans as art of the past. Thrust into a capitalist society, Native Americans “were conceived of as making objects for tourist consumption or as objects of visual consumption themselves, both as sights to be seen and as photo opportunities.”⁵⁸ According to Dilworth, Native Americans “had been captured, framed, and tamed within the tourist spectacle.”⁵⁹

Although Native Americans did have small roles in the parade festivities, the history that Kramer and the Arizona Polo Association of Tucson wanted to portray was that of the Wild West and the cowboy of the pioneer days. Kramer dismissed the history of southern Arizona before colonization and depicted an Anglo-American cowboy throughout the advertisements for the rodeo events. In doing so, the history of the charro (cowboy) and the charrería (Mexican rodeo), which originated from Mexican and Spanish traditions, was ignored. As historian Kathleen Sands describes the Mexican rodeo, it “is a public demonstration of a complex folk tradition that dates back to seventeenth-century Mexico and finds its sources in medieval Spain.”⁶⁰ Even naming the rodeo event using Spanish language rather than English, “La Fiesta de Los

⁵⁸ Dilworth, “Tourists and Indians,” 149.

⁵⁹ Dilworth, “Tourists and Indians,” 154.

⁶⁰ Kathleen M. Sands, *Charrería Mexicana: An Equestrian Folk Tradition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 4.

Vaqueros,” which translates to “The Festival of Cowboys,” adds to the scripted space of romanticized visions of Tucson’s Spanish past. It was a hypocritical move for Kramer and his associates as they neglect to mention the Mexican and Spanish history and traditions embedded in the cowboy and rodeo. By omitting ethnic Mexicans from Tucson’s history, they became a remnant of the past even though they made up roughly twenty-five percent of Tucson’s population by 1920.⁶¹

Even though Mexican representation was not outright evident in the 1925 parade, the first rodeo did include ropers with Spanish surnames. *Progressive Arizona*, a promotional magazine co-founded by Leighton Kramer in 1925 to promote La Fiesta and other Tucson attractions, highlighted the 1925 events in their February 1926 issue. The article, “Interesting News of the Rodeo,” provides an overview of the popular 1925 rodeo events and listed noted participants. A few local ropers are named, some with Spanish surnames like A. Altamarino, Jesus Lopes, Francisco Orosco, C. Ascelente, and Ramon Ahumada.⁶² Besides these names, nothing else is mentioned in this issue that documents Mexican or Spanish representation in the 1925 La Fiesta events. Even without much representation in the events and the omission of their influences publicly announced on the rodeo and Tucson’s past, Tucson’s Mexican community included themselves in La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros as spectators and parade-goers.

Even though this history was largely ignored throughout the festivities of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, *El Tucsonense*, a conservative-leaning, Spanish-language Tucson newspaper in business from 1915 to 1957, assumed otherwise. On February 21, 1925, the newspaper published

⁶¹ Since the United States Census did not start using racial and ethnic identities to denote Latin heritage until the 1970s, it is hard to determine the exact number of ethnic Mexicans that lived in Tucson during the 1920s. Instead, the U.S. Census most likely marked ethnic Mexicans as foreign-born whites, which differentiated native-born whites, which the Census saw as European Americans. According to the 1920 U.S. Census, Tucson had a population of 20,292 people, with 4,261 marked as foreign-born white from Mexico. U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. III* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 77-81.

⁶² Johnny Mullins, “Interesting News of the Rodeo,” *Progressive Arizona* vol 2. No. 2 (Feb 1926); 16.

their own version of the La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros program. The article greatly describes the events and provides a short detail of the festivities' purpose:

“Esta fiesta fue genuinamente Mexicana antes, y cuando los vaqueros mexicanos tomaron parte en ellas con sus sombreros charros llenos de galones, con las sillas de montar recamadas de plata, con pantalones con botonaduras de plata a lo largo de la pierna fue un espectáculo excitante. . . La fiesta actual será una fiesta que recordará las tradiciones antiguas de lo que fue el Oeste en sus días de alegría y festejos, ahora pintorescamente imitadas.”

(Translation) “This fiesta was genuinely Mexican before, and when the Mexican cowboys took part in them with their cowboy hats, with silver-back saddles, with pants with silver buttons along the leg was an exciting show. . . The current festival will be a fiesta that will recall the ancient traditions of what was the West in its days of joy and festivities, now picturesquely imitated.”⁶³

This text reminiscences about the days of the vaquero, the Mexican cowboy. The editors of the newspaper highlight the vaquero's intricate and gaudy costume, shining of silver-back saddles and silver buttons. They also note the rodeo's Mexican roots and that its traditions will be acknowledged in the rodeo events of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros. However, this was not the case as Kramer and the rodeo committee did not acknowledge the Mexican and Spanish roots of the cowboy and rodeo in any of its publications, including the main program. Yet as it went unacknowledged, the official rodeo pamphlet was released in early February, claiming a pioneer history of southern Arizona. It can be assumed that the editors of *El Tucsonense* read the pamphlet and noticed that the history of Mexican Americans, and Native Americans, of southern Arizona had been left out of the publication. By writing their own version of the festivities' program, the editors of *El Tucsonense* attempted to stake a claim of their Mexican culture into the present, hoping to be included in the festivities, and accordingly place ethnic Mexicans of Tucson into its civic life and future.

⁶³ “Programa de la ‘Fiesta del Rodeo’ en Los Días 21, 22, y 23 de Febrero,” *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), February 21, 1925, 6.

Even as the editors of *El Tucsonense* sought to commemorate the Mexican and Spanish heritage in the festivities by addressing it in the newspaper's rendition of the rodeo program, this may have also been personal for the editors. *El Tucsonense* was founded for the purpose of improving the race of Latin Americans.⁶⁴ Even with this credit in their first publication in 1915, *El Tuconsense* catered to the middle-class Mexican Americans, especially the Mexican American businessman (including the paper's editors) who provided most of the newspaper's advertising revenue.⁶⁵ The Polo Association of Tucson and the committee members of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros consisted of prominent businessmen of Tucson. Some, like Kramer, were fairly new residents of the city. Only two known Mexican Americans participated as rodeo committee members: Carlos Ronstadt as one of the announcers for the rodeo and J.M Ronstadt as a recorder.⁶⁶ Such an obvious racial disconnect among the fiesta committee members reveals the white-washed historical interpretation of southern Arizona, the local native cultures, the cowboy, and the rodeo embedded throughout the festivities of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros.

As the first festivities of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros concluded on the eve of February 23, 1925, Kramer and his associates established a new version of Tucson's history to its visiting guests. A city once lived and cared for by its local Indigenous peoples—Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O'odham—and once home to Mexicans before the Gadsen Purchase, Tucson had become a place where white Americans laid claim to not only its landscape but also its historical past. The history that the first parade of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros told was an unrealistic portrayal of southern Arizona and the diverse cultures that have long cultivated, worked, and influenced Tucson's past and present. Tucson's visiting guests, predominantly Eastern wealthy

⁶⁴ "Al Publico," *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), March 17, 1915, 1.

⁶⁵ Thomas Sheridan, *El Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 180-183.

⁶⁶ *Annual Rodeo-La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros* official rodeo program, February 21, 1925, AHSA.

white Americans, learned a white-washed history of southern Arizona as Tucson boosters gave them a romanticized vision of local Native Americans and ethnic Mexicans.

This historical illusion appeared to have continued throughout the twentieth century as local Native Americans, ethnic Mexicans, and other minoritized groups continued to be left out of many events of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, except for those whose cultural display, like Lone Wolf's, financially benefited Tucson. Though this commodification and exoticism of the other did not last forever. Starting in the 1940s, the festivities saw more Mexican and local Native American representation. Historian Geraldo Cadava notes in his book *Standing on Common Ground: The Making of a Sunbelt Borderland*, that the Good Neighbor Policy influenced this change during the 1940s. As the Cold War caused fear among Americans, the United States sought to hold good relations with Latin America. During this time, Arizona partnered with Sonora, Mexico, and their friendly relationship played into La Fiesta in the 1940s and 1950s. Cadava writes that the "rodeo and parade highlighted the cultivation of harmonious international relations as a way of nurturing regional economic development; the intimate ties between transnational business and civic organizations and regional politics; the rise of cross-border tourism; and shifting demographic and racial realities on both sides of the border."⁶⁷ The image below perfectly captures this international relationship building between Mexico and southern Arizona. It is sometime in the 1940s and La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros is in full swing. The downtown sidewalks are already crowded with spectators, and the parade procession is slowly making its way through the city center. In this specific scene, an elegantly dressed man in Mexican cowboy attire sits at the front of the open wagon, holding the reins of two horses helping him steer. Another man, dressed in a sombrero and a poncho, sits directly behind the

⁶⁷ Cadava, "La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros," 57-58.

wagon's driver, facing the opposite way. A woman dressed in a fabulous, ruffled dress and a sombrero, sits at the back of the wagon, smiling wide and waving at the crowd. An American flag, beautifully draped over the side of the wagon, creates a stunning display of international bridge building.

Another example of this representation happened in the 1950 festivities as the first day of La Fiesta was set as Mexican day. The parade committee displayed the Mexican flag alongside the American flag and the Arizona flag while Sonora's Governor Ignacio Soto rode in a wagon with Arizona's Governor Dan E. Garvey. This same year, the parade committee celebrated other cultures; Friday was Triikkaa day which celebrated the Greek heritage, and Saturday was Indian day.⁶⁸ Even with more Mexican and Native American representation in La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, Mexicans and Native Americans continued to be racialized and segregated throughout Tucson. This is evident during downtown Tucson's urban renewal project in the 1960s.⁶⁹

However, La Fiesta's participants and its audience continued to change as Tucson's ethnic Mexicans, Tohono O'odham, Pascua Yaqui, and other ethnic groups, began to take up space in many of its events. In 2021, the rodeo parade committee boasts how the parade

⁶⁸ Indian day was also celebrated other years, including 1942 and 1943. In 1942, Native Americans were invited to participate in their own rodeo day, apart from the main rodeo event that year. In 1943, the festival program states that "the Indian days are planned to show you the progress of the Indian during the last thousand years or more." "Gala Pageant Ready to Roll," *The Star* (Tucson, AZ), February 21, 1950, 1B; "Biggest Parade Ever Ushers in Annual Event," *The Star* (Tucson, AZ), February 23, 1950, 1A; *La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros: Tucson's Midwinter Rodeo, February 20, 21, 22, 1942*, La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros ephemera, 1925-2000, Arizona Historical Society Archives, Tucson, AZ, February 1942; *La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros: Tucson's Midwinter Rodeo*, La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros ephemera, 1925-2000, Arizona Historical Society Archives, Tucson, AZ, February 1943.

⁶⁹ The Pueblo Center Redevelopment Project, supported by Tucson's government, offered a way to revitalize downtown Tucson. As cities grew and shopping centers spread to more convenient and newer areas in town, and with the rise of the mall, city centers and downtown districts lost a lot of appeal to locals and tourists. This project allowed for the construction of several government buildings, a retail complex, and the Tucson Convention Center. This project also led to the destruction of a historic Mexican neighborhood and the displacement of Mexican Americans and other ethnic groups. For more information about The Pueblo Center Redevelopment Project and its displacement of a Mexican American community, see Lydia Otero, *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010.



Image of three Mexican individuals inside a wagon riding in the parade of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros in Tucson, Arizona, circa early 1940s. Provided by: Tucson Rodeo Parade Museum, Tucson, AZ.

showcases many of Tucson’s cultures. *Tucson Citizen* writer Corky Simpson wrote in 1991 that “no other sporting event—golf, tennis, college basketball, football, or even baseball—quite captures the spirit of this community like our colorful and exciting annual rodeo. The cowboys, the horses, the clowns, the specialty acts—and most imports of all, the spectators themselves—give this city each year a weeklong celebration of what we are and what we used to be.”⁷⁰ Stan Martin, La Fiesta’s Rodeo Parade Museum chairman, music vice chairman, and their publicity chairman, notices how many cultures and traditions of the Southwest continue to be embedded in the rodeo parade. Stan believes this is because of the rodeo parade continual annual theme, “Southwest Heritage.” Martin states:

⁷⁰ Corky Simpson, “Tucson Lucky to be Graced with La Fiesta,” *The Citizen* (Tucson, AZ), February 14, 1991, 10.

Look at the diversity of people that are in the parade. You know, we've got three or four different Indigenous people[s] that have had their groups, from Sells or from other organizations [in the parade]. Then we've got the [Pascua] Yaquis, we've got the [Tohono] O'odham, you know, sometimes we've got the Apaches in there. We've got, you know, the Buffalo Soldiers, we've got the Mormon battalion, we've got cowboys. It's such a diverse group that's there. Even if you take the Hispanic culture, you've got the more modern kind of Banda music, you got mariachis, you've got the folklorico dancers, you've got so much just in that culture. You've got Native people [some] that are in their native dress . . . It's a melting pot and I think that's what really draws a lot of people from out of state. It's like wow, look at this! Not just Tucson but southern Arizona, how diverse we are . . . We like our parade to represent everybody.⁷¹

Compared to Leighton Kramer's vision for the 1925 parade, the parade of today represents the heart and soul of Tucson as it showcases the racially and culturally diverse communities that represent Tucson. The difference between today and the earlier days of the parade is that these groups can and are encouraged to represent their culture in the way that they want to express themselves and be seen by the public. They hold themselves in the present without romanticizing their past. Yet they still display their cultures and traditions in their own way, by playing their music, wearing traditional clothing, and speaking, or rather singing, in their preferred language. Today's rodeo parade is far more inclusive of local Mexican and Native American cultures, traditions, and its people. It is a reclamation of their past, present, and future.

La Fiesta's ethnic and racial inclusivity also happened because of the parade route's transition from downtown to Tucson's southside in 1991. The rodeo parade committee decided to change the parade route due to safety concerns of parade participants, its spectators, and the horses and other animals used in the parade. The rodeo committee also sought an area that could provide a larger space for more guest parking and seating. Herb Wagner, rodeo parade committee member in 1991 recalls in an oral history recorded in August 2021:

We were downtown until 1990. 1991 was the first year we moved...there were several, a lot of reasons why we did it. The biggest was for [the] safety of the

⁷¹ Stan Martin, interview by Monique Davila, Tucson, Arizona, August 5, 2021.

crowds. The crowds downtown had gotten enormous. We get police estimates every year for the size of the crowd and they were getting estimates of over 250,000 people downtown. And if you know downtown, it's got fairly narrow streets, but they also have very narrow sidewalks. So, you'd have all these people lined up along the parade route jammed between buildings and ends of sidewalks at the curb and they were, you know, packed in there. And sometimes they spilled out into the street.⁷²

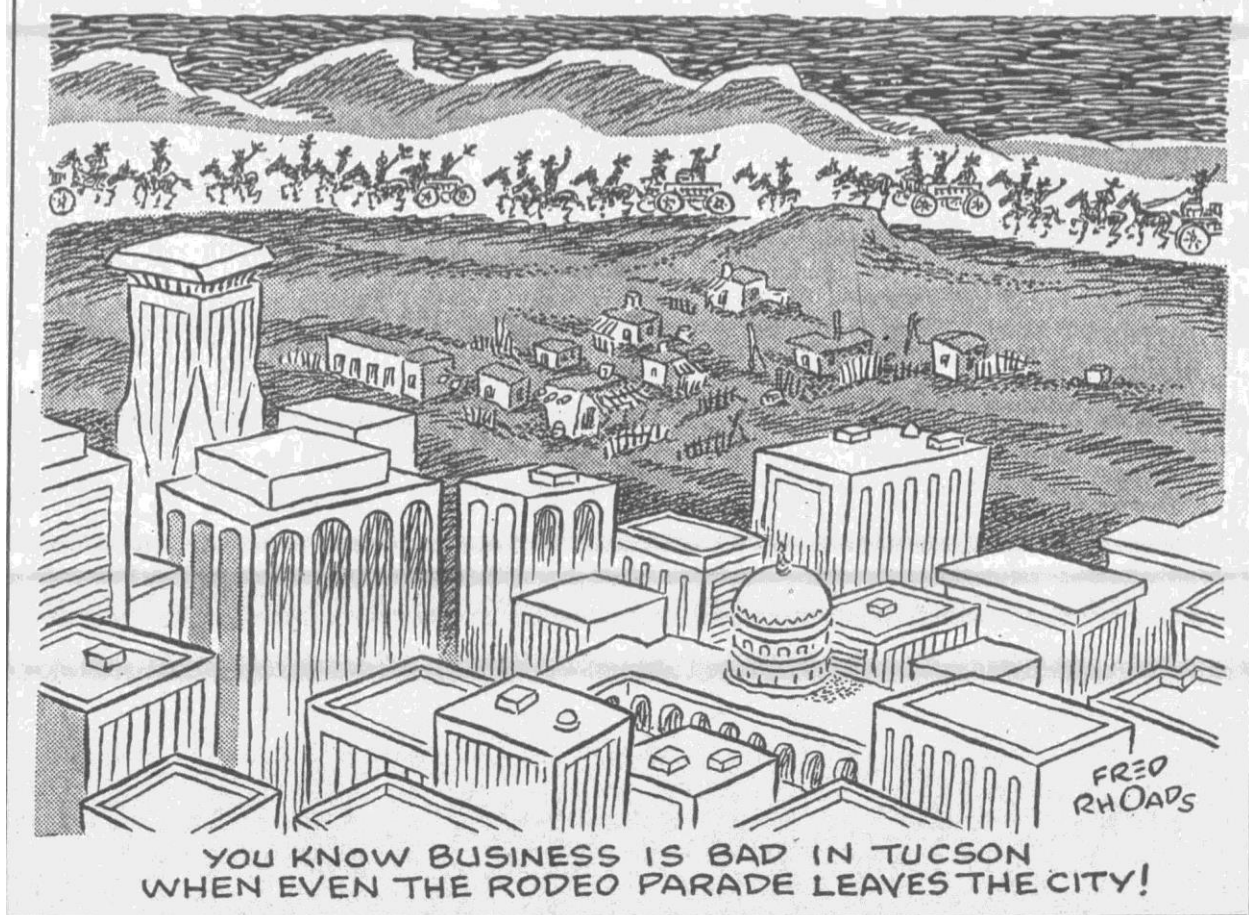
Even with these safety concerns in mind, many Tucsonans, including downtown businesses, detested the move. One comic featured in the *Tucson Citizen* poked fun at downtown businesses' battle to keep the rodeo parade in that area. The comic, created by Fred Rhoads, illustrates a line of cowboys, horses, and carriages in the distance, trotting along a mountain range among a desolate, desert landscape. Shack-like homes litter this barren area, representing the southside of Tucson, while a crowded area filled with tall buildings, representing downtown Tucson, sits in the forefront. The bottom of the comic states, "you know business is bad in Tucson when even the rodeo parade leaves the city!" Designed as satire, Rhoads' comic represents the irony of downtown businesses and their stance against the rodeo parade's removal from downtown. After World War Two, developers began to greatly expand the city past the city center as Tucson's population boomed. The city's growth attracted downtown businesses to move their stores into more populated areas with expansive shopping centers, such as El Con Mall and Park Place Mall, both east of downtown. In the 1980s and into the early 1990s, government, state, and cooperate businesses occupied most of downtown Tucson rather than businesses that attracted tourism. The rodeo parade was one of the only popular events that attracted people downtown.

Even though this comic makes fun of those protesting the rodeo parade's route transition, it greatly misrepresents Tucson's south side. Like the comic shows, citizens against the route's transition continued to highlight that the southside was known as an industrial part of town.

⁷² Herb Wagner, interview by Monique Davila, Tucson, Arizona, August 20, 2021.

Tucson Today

By Fred Rhoads



A comic, drawn by Fred Rhoads and featured in the *Tucson Citizen* on January 31, 1991, represents the dissatisfaction of downtown businesses and many Tucsonans with the route change of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros' rodeo parade from downtown Tucson to the southside. Fred painted the southside as a desolate, desert landscape with shack-like homes. Fred Rhoads, "Tucson Today," *Tucson Citizen*, January 31, 1991.

Even as an industrial area, Tucsonans, especially many ethnic Mexicans, have lived and worked there well before industrial businesses were built in these areas. The Fairgrounds Neighborhood, which surrounds the rodeo parade route, consists of homes built around the mid-twentieth century. Tucson newspapers ignored this fact and continued to point out the southside's industrial area and questioned if this was the right move for tourism. One unnamed editor for *Dateline: Downtown*, a newspaper written by the Downtown Business Association (DBA), questioned this move by commenting on the southside's industrial aspects. They wrote,

“somehow, the proposed route with a backdrop of the City Operations & Bus Maintenance Center, a beer distribution plant, the daily newspaper plant, and row upon row of half empty industrial parks and trucks depots doesn’t seem like the place to invite thousands of visitors to show off Tucson. Don’t ask about shade, parking, mud, or public facilities.”⁷³ Even so, the DBA and others were proven wrong.⁷⁴ Also, many people did not consider that the rodeo, the main tourist attraction of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros, was held at the Rodeo Fairgrounds on Tucson’s south side, right on the newly proposed route. Since 1930, both Tucsonans and tourists have been traveling to the southside to participate in and watch La Fiesta rodeo events. Davenport highlighted this fact by stating, “personally, what we have to remember is, this rodeo has been going on down here since 1930. Okay, *here*.”⁷⁵

According to Herb, Stan, and Tom—current rodeo parade committee members—in 1990 the southside neighborhoods and businesses were thrilled that the rodeo parade would be moving to that area. According to Wagner, “[The Fairgrounds Neighborhood Association] thought it was great...The Council Member who was down in Ward 5 at the time was 100% behind it because it brought a positive thing down to his neighborhood and his ward in the the southern portion of Tucson, and he was all for it. And we had full cooperation with the neighborhood association from day one. And it's been that way since.”⁷⁶ And even now, according to Martin, “the community opens [their] arms for us...they love it because people will go over and hitch up their

⁷³ “Rodeo Parade Gives Perspective to Downtown, City,” *Dateline: Downtown* (Tucson, AZ), September 1990, 2.

⁷⁴ Even though both the rodeo and parade have been held in the southside of town since 1991, many Tucsonans still refuse to go to the parade since the southside has and continues to have a bad rap of crime.

⁷⁵ The ‘here’ is italicized to indicate Tom’s physical reaction when he said this phrase. The interview took place on the Rodeo Fairgrounds and when Tom said “here,” he used his index finger to hit the table three times to indicate that the rodeo was held in this same spot since 1930. Tom Davenport, interview by Monique Davila, Tucson, Arizona, August 4, 2021.

⁷⁶ Herb Wagner, interview by Monique Davila, Logan, Utah, August 20, 2021.

horses out in front of [Whataburger] ...It's like only in Tucson [people] see horses hitched up at a Whataburger.”⁷⁷

Even with the rodeo parade’s transition, it continues to be a huge celebration, especially among southside Tucsonans. It is such a locally celebrated event that most Tucson school districts designate a few days off during La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros so youth can attend the parade on Thursday morning or watch it on television. Erika Fierros, a Mexican American woman who was born in Tucson and raised in the Fairgrounds neighborhood, recalls how exciting it was for her whole family to walk to the rodeo parade from her home.

My dad would always take me and my sisters to [the rodeo parade] and I remember it was just something that my dad would be so excited for us... We got your snacks, we got your food, we got the blankets. He made it so exciting for us, and we all walked [to the rodeo parade] together. I just think those are the most beautiful memories and it made it very special. After the parade was over, we would just walk around the neighborhood because back then there were just a couple of neighbors that would put on shows in their front yards or people would be selling things.

Valerie Davila, also a Mexican American woman raised in the southside, realized that the rodeo parade “was like a big holiday for all of Tucson, like I said I always took time off [of work]. I always made sure to take that time off because the parade was happening, the rodeo was on, and there’s a lot of people that [take time off]. They’ll request that time in advance because it’s a big holiday for a lot of families, on the southside especially.”⁷⁸

As stated previously, Kramer and other western city boosters sought to hide most of their city’s local racial groups and instead represented a white-washed history to tourists and the public. Western tourism relied heavily on the exoticism and commodification of Native Americans, ethnic Mexicans, and other minoritized groups for the benefit of Anglo-Americans

⁷⁷ Stan Martin, interview by Monique Davila, Tucson, Arizona, August 5, 2021.

⁷⁸ Erika Fierros and Valerie Davila, interview by Monique Davila, Tucson, Arizona, July 30, 2021.

and capitalism. Kramer and Tucson boosters used the same strategies for the 1925 events of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros as they too exoticized and commodified Native Americans and ethnic Mexican cultures and traditions while ignoring the historical contributions of local Indigenous people and ethnic Mexicans. Again, excluding and diminishing local people's contribution to history continued throughout the twentieth century. Even with the presence of more Mexican American inclusion in the parades during the 1940s through 1960s, their contribution to local politics and establishments were still being tested and ignored. However, when the parade route transition occurred in 1991, the cultural ownership of the rodeo parade quietly shifted.

Unknowingly, ethnic Mexicans of Tucson became the primary designators of their own culture and traditions. The rodeo parade's move to a predominately Mexican area of Tucson facilitated this shift. Once excluded, exoticized, and commodified for the sake of tourism and profit, ethnic Mexicans, and to a lesser extent local Native Americans, took back ownership of La Fiesta de Los Vaqueros.

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