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THE LEGACY OF PIONEER MEXICAN-AMERICANS
IN SOUTH COLTON, CALIFORNIA

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
in a
Special Major

by
Maria C. Gamboa

June 1989

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A Thesis
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Maria C. Gamboa

June 1989

Approved by:

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Dr. James C. Pierson, Chair, Anthropology

6/9/89

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Dr. Russell J. Barber, Anthropology

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Dr. Kent Schofield, History

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ABSTRACT

Large numbers of Mexico's people emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. They settled in the Southwest and created distinct rural and urban ethnic enclaves that still exist. These communities have been largely overlooked by researchers, and there is little published information available about them or their inhabitants. This thesis examines one of these communities, South Colton, California. Approaches from history and anthropology are used to present a broad perspective to the community's development. Data was obtained in ethnographic research conducted over a two-year period from 1987-1989 from a group of the community's pioneer Mexican-American settlers. The oral histories obtained from these people provide information about the immigrant experience and the community's development. South Colton is close to the San Bernardino Valley's earliest non-aboriginal settlements of La Placita and Agua Mansa. The research indicates that diffusion settlement occurred. Also, South Colton was isolated from primary development which enabled inhabitants to retain traditional culture and resist assimilation into mainstream society. It is likely that development of this community is similar to other Mexican-American communities in the Southwest.

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CHAPTER ONE

SCOPE, SETTING, METHODOLOGY AND OBSTACLES:

A PREFACE TO ETHNOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Anthropology as a discipline is concerned with human beings and their diversity. It is complementary to the discipline of history which is concerned with the chronicling of significant events. It is the purpose of this thesis to combine approaches from these disciplines to examine a small urban community in Southern California. There is little published information available about this community's development or inhabitants, and this thesis is intended to make such information available. Data from ethnographic fieldwork and historical research are combined to present a broader perspective of the development of South Colton, California.

The community exists primarily because of immigration from Mexico in the early 1900s. The primary focus of this thesis is to record ethnographic and historical data obtained from the pioneer settlers in the community before they pass into history. The information is presented from an emic perspective and gives insight into the shared ideals, values and way of life, or culture, of a group of immigrants who were participants in a significant immigrant

experience in California.

This thesis is the result of ethnographic research conducted from July, 1987, to February, 1989, in the community of South Colton. Because of the scant information available, the primary research focus was to conduct interviews and obtain oral histories from key informants selected from among the elderly residents in the community who immigrated from Mexico in the early 1900s. These sources were the oldest community members who had been active participants in the development of the early community in South Colton.

There were some obstacles in obtaining information. For example, in an effort to obtain a balanced perspective of the general history of the area, an interview was held with a leader in the local historical association on May 7, 1987. As the intent to research the development of South Colton was explained, the person interviewed became agitated and angry. She insisted the topic of prejudice in the community be excluded from the research. She did not support the research to any significant degree.

Other people encouraged the research. A prominent figure within the South Colton community, the pastor of the primary religious center at San Salvador Catholic Church, approved of the research objective. He publicized the research in the Church's weekly bulletin and urged

participation by the community. This approval was valuable in gaining the recognition and acceptance of community members.

The elderly residents were the primary sources for essential information in order to develop a composite of the community's earliest development. The Luque Recreation Center, located in Veterans' Park in South Colton, is a locale where the Hispanic elderly gather for recreational and social purposes. The director of the Center was enthusiastic about the research and generously made many introductions to the Center's participants. By this time I had interviewed a mental health professional with a Master's Degree in Counseling to obtain guidelines and strategies concerning establishing rapport and interview techniques for this research. This was helpful but did not sufficiently prepare me for the level of resistance displayed by the elderly at the Center.

There was no doubt the Center's elderly participants were interested in the research; they indicated they were aware that researchers have generally overlooked their community. Nevertheless, they expressed fear of ridicule and the possibility of misunderstanding from the dominant society. By my association with a university, as a student, I represented that society. It took some time to finally establish rapport; even then cooperation was guarded and

never reached a significant level. The people were extremely apprehensive. Only after they established a connection through our common ethnic background did they cooperate. It appeared they had to satisfy themselves that I had a personal connection with the culture and South Colton. Once they were satisfied about this issue, they agreed to participate. It is my belief that the communal setting and lack of privacy at the Center were important factors in their initial reluctance to cooperate.

Access to key informants was eventually gained by referrals from the elderly participants at the Center. As a peer group for the elderly residents throughout the community, they had knowledge of those inhabitants with the longest history in the community. After this it was a matter of approaching residents throughout South Colton. There were many rejections, particularly from male residents. In several instances they agreed and began discussing the topic, but in the midst of the interview became uncomfortable and left suddenly. Finally, there were several elderly residents, both male and female, who agreed to participate in this ethnographic research. These interviews were conducted in a private setting familiar to the informants.

The majority of interviews were conducted in informants' homes. One interview was conducted in San

Bernardino and another in San Diego with sources who had important roles in the early community. The interviews were open-ended, and were one to three hours in length. In several instances multiple interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Several interviews were conducted monolingually in Spanish. At the conclusion of this research, 22 informants had been interviewed and tape recorded. Every hour tape recorded translated into three hours transcription time. Journals of interviews were also made.

The techniques used in conducting the research for this thesis were:

- 1) Establishing rapport with key informants
- 2) Conducting open-ended interviews
- 3) Participant observation
- 4) Library research
- 5) Archival research

It should be noted that this thesis contains information of a historical nature that places the community of South Colton in a historical continuum in relation to its geographic location. However, the primary focus of this study is the information obtained from the memories of the pioneer Mexican-American settlers of South Colton. It is possible that the information contained in these recollections might differ from official versions. However,

for purposes of this thesis, the primary concerns were peoples' memories.

The following chapters provide background information about the development of South Colton. Chapter 2 reviews the forces responsible for Mexican immigration and settlement in this geographic location. Because South Colton is near historic settlements in the region, Chapter 3 places the community in a historical continuum relative to other nearby pioneer settlements. In Chapter 4, South Colton is viewed entirely by information obtained in interviews conducted with pioneer Mexican-American settlers in South Colton. Chapter 5 examines information significant to participants which relates to the impact of discrimination on the early community. Chapter 6 reviews various adaptations made by the inhabitants in the early community, and, finally, Chapter 7 offers conclusions pertinent to this Mexican-American immigrant experience and settlement.

CHAPTER TWO
MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Historically strong forces for freedom in times of political turmoil or the compelling need to improve economic conditions have caused people to uproot themselves and leave their homeland and relocate in distant, foreign lands where language and culture are unknown. Such forces existed in the early 1890s as Mexico experienced upheavals at every level of society. As a result, large numbers of Mexican citizens who had once been part of traditional hacendado (private) and ejido (communal) land systems began to emigrate northward to the United States in search of peace and economic opportunity. For many the railroad facilitated their trek; others simply walked across the border and settled in the Southwestern United States. Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California received the vast majority of these immigrants. By 1920, well over 600,000 Mexican immigrants had settled in the United States (Cardoso 1985:22).

The United States was in the midst of expansion and required a labor supply in excess of that available in the largely underpopulated Southwest. In addition, the Exclusion Act of 1882 had removed the Chinese from the labor

force and, not long after, immigration from Europe was restricted, further reducing sources of labor (Schaefer 1988:124; Cardoso 1980:20). In need of a large labor supply, business interests quickly turned to Mexican immigrants and employed them in mining, agriculture and railway industries. As a result, concentrations of Mexican immigrants created distinct rural and urban enclaves that still exist. These settlements have been largely ignored by researchers, and consequently there is little published information about their inhabitants or community development.

South Colton, California, is one of these communities. It is a small urban enclave where many of the elderly inhabitants can trace their roots to immigration from Mexico in the early 1900s.

The typical town plan in early Mexican colonias (colonies) in the Southwest usually included a central plaza area. Some communities developed out of early labor camps. In contrast, South Colton developed as part of a planned townsite; even so, the community contained sections designated for habitation by laborers and their families known as secciones (sections) and reservas (reservations) (Moore 1985; McWilliams 1968). In general, however, South Colton developed similarly to other Mexican immigrant communities in the Southwest; it abutted primary

development, but, as Carey McWilliams noted (1968:217),
"...the community developed on the other side of something."

In effect the Southern Pacific Railroad lines were the barrier that separated the community in South Colton from the town's primary development. South Colton was close to area industries where community inhabitants were employed. Thus inhabitants lived in close proximity to the railroad, mining and citrus industries, yet the residential, worship and recreation areas were remote from those of the dominant society. This created an urban setting insular and culturally isolated, for there was little interaction between the town's sections. This parallel development was not accidental. Indeed, it was fostered by the dominant society, and as a result, the inhabitants of South Colton retained a cultural homogeneity that is still evident.

Immigrants from Mexico to Colton had a unique ancestry. They were part of the mestensaje (mestizo) created by the fusion of Spanish and indigenous populations during the Spanish Conquest of 1521. Their ancestry and history were worlds apart from the Anglo-european stock that predominated the development of Colton in 1887. To an extent, Mexican immigrants were representatives of ancient hostilities dating back to Old World conflicts between Protestant England and Roman Catholic Spain. As a consequence, they did not receive acceptance to any significant degree.

Although their usefulness as unskilled laborers in local industries was acceptable, they were also victims of the xenophobia that gripped the country and forced the expulsion of Chinese laborers in 1882 and also precluded citizenship for many Japanese until 1952 (Schaefer 1988:386).

In the early 1900s Mexican immigrants settled in South Colton primarily because there were industries nearby that required a large workforce of unskilled labor. However, there were other factors that attracted the newcomers to South Colton. Vital cultural connections were present dating to the region's earliest settlement by pioneers from New Mexico in the early 1800s. These cultural connections accommodated Hispanic and Mexican cultural values--language, religion and community. Mexican immigrants over time coalesced with those descendants from the New Mexican pioneers that had diffused to the South Colton area from the pioneer settlements at La Placita (small plaza) and Agua Mansa (gentle water). La Placita and Agua Mansa were the first settlements in the San Bernardino Valley (Vickery 1984:31).

South Colton and historic Agua Mansa were geographically close. In the early 1900s there was interaction between the two communities (Luna 1989.) Agua Mansa was situated approximately one mile southwest of the western boundary of South Colton. The close cultural ties

between the two settlements is particularly evidenced by San Salvador Roman Catholic Church, the religious center which forms the nexus for the South Colton community.

The settlers at La Placita were devout Roman Catholics. A priority to settlement on the southern banks of the Santa Ana River was to erect a place for worship for the fledgling community. From its humble origins there, the Church initially constructed at La Placita boasts a peripatetic and colorful history. Originally New Mexican pioneers constructed the church on the southern banks of the Santa Ana River. This structure was constructed too close to the river on unsound ground and was destroyed by quicksand. Then the church was reconstructed across the river on the northern banks at the community of Agua Mansa in 1851. Agua Mansa was the twin community to La Placita, but the church was no safer there. Fire and flood disasters destroyed the structure which had taken the community a year to construct. In 1893 the church was relocated farther inland and away from the river to a location on South Fifth Street in South Colton. This structure was destroyed by fire (Harley and Mitchell 1985:6). Finally in 1912 a wood frame structure was constructed on the northwest corner of Seventh and L¹ Streets in South Colton (Olson 1980:10). This wooden structure served the community until 1976 (1980 Commemorative Pamphlet). Although the wooden structure was

replaced with a modern one, the church is still the focal point for the community.

Geographically South Colton is a relatively small area of approximately three square miles (see Figure 1). It is that part of the City of Colton which lies south of the Southern Pacific Railroad and Interstate 10 Freeway, west of the Santa Ana River, north of Fogg Street and east of Slover Mountain (City of Colton Master Plan 1980:50). La Cadena Drive is the main traffic artery in the community and bisects the area from north to south. Upon entering this community it is readily apparent that poverty is no stranger here. It is an economically depressed and stagnating region. Most buildings are old and in need of repair. Indeed over half the community's dwellings were constructed prior to 1939. Nonetheless it is a stable community as indicated by the sizable number of families that resided there for over twenty years--33% as of 1970. The Mexican American population of South Colton is 2598, or 67% of the community (Bureau of the Census 1980).

CHAPTER THREE
A HISTORICAL CONTINUUM

South Colton and the surrounding vicinity have been on the geographic periphery of significant historical events dating back to California's earliest epoch as a Spanish and Mexican territory. First of all, Spanish settlement was accomplished by the establishment of a formidable mission system that transformed Spanish territories into secure and productive settlements. Pedro Fages in 1772 was the first Spanish explorer to traverse this region in its pristine environment as he travelled to Monterey in Northern California. In March 1774 the rumble of a terremoto (earthquake) greeted the Juan Batista De Anza expedition of 240 men, women and Indians as they camped nearby on the banks of the Santa Ana River. They were on a mission to forge an overland trail from Sonora in Mexico to Monterey and planned to stop at Mission San Gabriel (Craft 1906:11).

The area's potential for development and subsequent settlement was quickly recognized by the exploring missionaries. In 1810 Fray Francisco Dumetz² was instructed by his superiors at Mission San Gabriel to build a chapel in a location between present-day Colton and Urbita Springs, a marshy area which lay just east. The indigenous

Serrano and Cahuilla Indians lived here in a large rancheria
(settlement) known as Guachama (Vickery 1984:9; Caballeria
1902:39).

The Indians of Guachama were essentially a peaceable lot; they were amenable to overtures from the missionaries. In time zanjas (ditches) were constructed by the Indians under the tutelage of the missionaries for the purpose of irrigating their small farms, and the region prospered (Vickery 1984:10). This success encouraged the superiors at Mission San Gabriel to authorize construction of a temporary mission, the San Bernardino Asistencia, with future plans to develop it into the first inland mission in the region.

However, not all Indians were so agreeable. The San Bernardino Valley was often raided by desert Indians from Utah, the formidable Paiutes, who often swept down the San Gorgonio Pass and terrorized the valley's inhabitants. Raiding and hostilities escalated to such a degree that the area reverted to hostile territory and the asistencia was never completed (Vickery 1984; Beattie and Beattie 1939; Caballeria 1902).

Meanwhile the Cajon Pass in the northern sector of the San Bernardino Valley was part of the Santa Fe Trail. The Santa Fe Trail was a vital commercial artery in the 1800s. It was a hazardous overland route that began in Independence, Missouri, and ended in Los Angeles,

California. The Trail's 1200 miles crossed deserts, mountains and valleys and was regularly traversed by intrepid traders who trekked to Los Angeles to trade woolen goods for Chinese goods, horses and mules (Vickery 1984; Jones 1951; Beattie and Beattie 1939; Caballeria 1902). California horses and mules were highly prized in New Mexico, and each spring, several thousand beasts left the San Bernardino Valley after having camped in the vicinity of Colton for long periods of time. Traders remained camped at this location for months awaiting clearance from Mexican authorities in Los Angeles for them to leave California with their goods.

Thus New Mexican traders passing through the region became acquainted with the valley's potential for settlement. Traders returned to New Mexico and spread the news about the area's desirable land, water and grass. San Bernardino Valley's earliest settlers were thus recruited.

In 1821 Mexico gained independence from Spain, and California became a Mexican territory. California was a vast territory, largely uninhabited and far removed from the centers of governance in Mexico. In order to retain control over this valued territory, nuevo pobladores (new settlers) were encouraged to relocate there. The official Mexican policy encouraged settlement under generous terms:

The governors (gefes politicos) of the territories are authorized (in compliance) with the law of the general Congress of the 18th of August 1824, and under the conditions specified, to grant vacant lands in their respective territories to such contractors (empresarios) families or private persons, whether Mexican or foreign, who may ask for them, for the purpose of cultivating them.

Southern California Colony Association vs Miguel Bustamante, et al, 1871.

In keeping with this policy, the entire San Bernardino Valley was parceled out in two large land grants. Juan Bandini, a Peruvian immigrant, applied for land and was given the Jurupa Grant on July 16, 1839, by Mexican Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. Then in 1842 the San Bernardino Grant was given to the sons of an influential Californio, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, along with Vicente Lugo and Diego Sepulveda. Stock raising in the valley increased tremendously. Indian raids increased as well and made the work extremely hazardous. It became essential to find a means to curb hostile indians.

The Lugo's wanted to attract settlers to their San Bernardino Rancho. New settlers had to be experienced indian fighters in order to assist in quelling hostilities. The solution they developed was to recruit skilled Indian fighters from New Mexico. Some inhabitants of Abiquiu, a settlement on the Chama River in New Mexico, were interested in relocating to southern California.

They were adept at Indian fighting and were veterans at fighting Comanche, Ute and Apache. In 1843 on the promise of land for settlement in exchange for services in defending the territory against hostile Indians, a small group of New Mexicans trekked to the San Bernardino Valley to begin the first settlement (Vickery 1984:25).

They settled just east of present-day Colton and called the fledgling community, La Politana. The group included Spaniards, Mexicans and Pueblo Indians and were led by Jose Antonio Martinez de la Rosa and Lorenzo Trujillo. For nearly a year they waited for the Lugos to fulfill the agreement for land. Just as they prepared to return to New Mexico, Juan Bandini made them an offer of land. This transaction is known as the Bandini Donation (Vickery 1984).

In a location just southwest of Colton, the land lay on the northernmost boundary of the Jurupa Rancho on both the north and south sides of the Santa Ana River. In 1843 Benjamin D. Wilson purchased a large segment of the Jurupa Rancho on condition that land adjacent to his be donated to the New Mexicans. In a deposition given many years later in litigation concerning land titles, Wilson recalled:

...the agreement between Bandini and the New Mexicans was that the New Mexicans should settle on said lands and make themselves useful in repelling invasion of the Indians in stealing stock and interrupting settlement in that portion of the country.

Stearns versus Juan Trujillo 1875.

Thus 2200 acres adjacent to Benjamin D. Wilson's land, including land on both sides of the Santa Ana River, were donated to the immigrants from Abiquiu. The New Mexicans called their settlement La Politana. The settlement reflected the Spanish and Mexican roots of the group. They spoke Spanish and were devout Roman Catholics. Settlers lived in adobe dwellings constructed around a plaza area. They raised wheat and ground it into flour with the molino (mortar stone). Sheep, horses and cattle were vital economic and food sources. Meat was dried for preservation, and then the dried strips were ground into guisos (stews).

There was a strong sense of community solidarity in La Politana. Births were community affairs, and several ladies assisted. They played malia (Spanish whist) and sipped wine while they waited for the event. a home-made hammock was made ready for the infant to sleep in when it arrived. Baptisms were held after the new mother completed a 40-day waiting period, and then the padrinos

(godparents) invited relatives, neighbors and friends to celebrate the event. Guitars and violins provided music for the festivities. Families in need were assisted by community benefit dances. Tamale suppers were held at midnight, and on birthdays, relatives and friends surprised people with serenatas (serenades) to the music of violins, guitars and tin cans (Olive Trujillo Vlahovich).⁴

It is from such a background that many of the current residents of South Colton are descended.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE ORAL HISTORIES OF MEXICAN AMERICAN PIONEERS
IN SOUTH COLTON

Participants in this research represent immigration from various regions in Mexico: Guanajuato, Coahuila, Sonora, Michoacan and Jalisco. They imported distinctive cultural traditions, such as the ones discussed in the previous chapter. Some of the participants indicated they returned to Mexico at some point and retained contact with extended families there to some degree; others indicated they severed all contact with their native country when they immigrated in the early 1900s.

South Colton can be described as a barrio (quarter or suburb) or perhaps as a colonia (colony or housing development). Participants refer to this place as the comunidad (community and place where a group of people live together). The participants represent a cross section of the community's earliest settlers: laborers in agriculture, railroad and mining; housewives, civil servants, business, religious and activists. Basically informants expressed similar reasons for settling in South Colton. They either migrated there, or their parents did, to improve their economic situation or because they fled war and persecution.

In recounting the oral histories, informants were not concerned with chronology. Instead their accounts were memories or events that occurred many years in the past and were part of a personal struggle in a developing urban environment. All information was provided by informants, except in a few instances where clarification was necessary and they are clearly referenced as such.

Although some of the informants would prefer to have their names used in the oral histories, and I would like to accommodate them, pseudonyms have been used instead for purposes of confidentiality and ethical considerations.

Serafina Davalos

Senora (Sra.) Serafina Davalos, 103, was one of the earliest settlers in South Colton. She emigrated from Cananea in Sonora, Mexico, with her husband and three young children in 1920. When they arrived, the area was a lonely, desolate place without streets, dwellings or electricity. People lived in tents; there weren't any amenities whatsoever. Water was imported in large canvas containers atop burros and sold to the settlers. Wood gathered from the surrounding countryside served their heating and cooking needs. The family supplemented their food sources by growing a small garden of tomatoes, corn, and squash. Chickens provided them with eggs and meat.

Sra. Davalos' husband started out working on the railroad. Life was difficult for both husband and wife; daily at 6 a.m. she rose to prepare breakfast and the lunch her husband took to work. There were a few mercantile establishments some distance away, but ready-made clothing was not available. So Sra. Davalos would purchase yardage goods for ten cents per yard and sew her family's wardrobe by hand. Often she would stay up until midnight sewing everything from underwear to trousers to meet her family's needs. Eventually the family grew to 13 children, and she would rarely venture away from home except to purchase yardage. Everything else was taken care of and supplied by her husband.

Her entire life was focused on caring for the family and others. As soon as her neighbors knew they were pregnant, they would hire her to care for them when their time came. She cooked, cleaned and babysat all in addition to her own work in order to augment her family's income.

When her children were born, she and her husband selected godparents for them. Godparents were selected from among their closest friends in the community. They became fictive kin to the family by strength of the compadrazgo (godparenthood) bond. Although the bond between the godparents and godchild was a close one, she indicated that the act of compadrazgo conferred a mutual responsibility

between the compadres to give mutual assistance in time of need. At times of illness or other hardships, they relied on each other a great deal.

She still exhibits a great deal of pride in her skills. It was her custom to bake yeast breads and fill a 25-lb. container, as well as offer her family a varied menu of Sonora-style cooking. She made flour and corn tortillas daily. The Sonora-style tortillas were made by hand with a slapping motion until the dough was paper thin and resembled oversized flat cakes. Other foods she prepared were potatoes, rice, beans, carne con chile colorado and carne con chile verde, tamales and menudo. With such a large family, the family wash was a big undertaking that she especially prided herself on doing well.

The family's first dwelling was a small adobe house they rented for many years. Then when her four sons served in World War II (two served in Europe and two served in the Pacific) she saved the allotment checks they sent her. She left Colton and worked in the flower fields as a way of coping with her anxiety for her sons' survival. When the war ended, she returned to Colton and purchased a small house where the family was reunited. The house was reputed to be 100 years old. Eventually the family had it torn down and a modern home with all conveniences was constructed in its place.

Her husband was an educated man who was active in social and community events. She raised 13 children successfully, controls her own financial affairs and travels extensively throughout the United States.

Margarita Luna

Margarita Luna was born in 1898 in San Pedro de las Colonias in Coahuila, Mexico. Her parents had lived on chinampas in central Mexico. (Chinampas were a productive system of agriculture used extensively in the Basin of Mexico prior to the Spanish Conquest.) In 1903 her family emigrated to the United States. Her father was employed by the railroad and worked extensively throughout the United States. The family lived on a railway car, and she recalled that often they would awaken in the mornings and discover themselves in strange and different surroundings.

Eventually they settled down in South Colton. She attended public school for fifteen days before her parents withdrew her. They were not pleased with the public school curriculum. Religion or sewing were not taught there. Instead they arranged for a tutor to instruct her at home. She learned reading, writing and arithmetic but instruction was in Spanish and she never became fluent in English.

In time her uncle met up with a persuasive traveling salesman who sold him a piano. No one in the family could

play it, so Sra. Luna's life was forever changed. She was the only one in the family to receive piano lessons, and eventually became a piano teacher in the community. At fifteen she became a church musician and performed in Catholic churches in Casa Blanca, Highgrove, Belltown and South Colton. She was the pianist at the San Salvador Church located on Fifth Street. When this church was destroyed by fire, she continued to play at the San Salvador Church constructed on Seventh Street. She participated in church music from 1913 to 1965, a span of over fifty years, before she retired.

In 1918 she was a young bride when the deadly influenza epidemic struck. Fever, illness and death struck the community with deadly force. Frequently no one in a household was spared. All ages succumbed to the disease. Contagion was greatly feared, and people were admonished not to visit the sick. She and her husband finally recovered from the disease, but the recovery process was slow.

Her husband was a musician and the leader of a small community music group. (See Figure 6.) She performed with the group on many occasions and recalled the gay times at the Tivoli Ballroom where families enjoyed themselves dancing to waltzes and traditional Mexican music. The group also performed at the Fiestas Patrias celebrations held each September 15th and 16th. When she was widowed in her

mid-forties, she supported her large family by giving piano lessons.

Over the 88-year span she resided in South Colton, she was the matriarchal head of a large extended family. In spite of many adversities, she maintained an extremely cohesive family network. She instituted special family traditions that reflected her piety and religious beliefs. In 1920 she began the family's Christmas traditions that have been practiced for 68 years.

First of all, every December 24th the family gathered to make tamales, the traditional foods for the Christmas season. These are made from cornmeal, meats and chiles and have been part of Mexican cuisine since before the Conquest. The Christmas tradition of acostando y levantando el niño (laying down and raising the Christ Child) was then celebrated. The entire family, including all the generations--1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations--gathered for these occasions. A wall in the home was especially prepared and decorated with greenery where a large Nativity scene was displayed. The occasion was celebrated with prayers, music and a special meal for the laying down of the Christ Child. Then on January 6th for the Feast of the Epiphany, the Christ Child was raised. Again the family gathered for the concluding celebration of the Christmas season.

Vivo en la casa del herrero con el azadon de palo (I

live in the home of the blacksmith with the wooden hoe) and other special music and hymns were sung. The family prayed the rosary and the Christ Child was adored. The figure representing the Infant Jesus was placed on a large tray surrounded by Christmas candy. Then the tray was passed from child to child in the gathering. The young children took turns rocking the figure as the group sang Christmas hymns. The levantando el nino celebration concluded with a festive meal and desserts.

Senora Luna's musical talents were generously expended in the South Colton community. By the time she retired as a church musician she had spent 50 years in that service.

Luis Durango

Senor Luis Durango is a dapper man of short stature with lively hazel eyes and a ready smile. His energy and appearance belie his 76 years. He was born in Douglas, Arizona, to immigrants from Mexico. His father was a French soldier who came to Mexico with Emperor Maximilian around 1864. After the French were defeated, his father remained in Mexico and attempted farming. He could not succeed at farming because he was continually conscripted to serve in the local posse to apprehend fugitives. He walked into the United States and settled in Arizona. In 1921, when Sr. Durango was nine years old, the family migrated to South

Colton.

At the age of 14, Sr. Durango worked in construction digging foundations for new construction. He worked ten hour days, six days a week and received a weekly paycheck of \$6.00. When he was older he worked at the local cement company as part of a blasting team. Workers were often overcome by fumes from blasts and had to work with severe headache. Once, his team blasted enough rock to keep them working one full year. The blast was so tremendous that inspectors from state and county agencies denied them permission to conduct blasts of that magnitude again.

While working in a tunnel, limestone fell in his eyes. The company doctor placed water in his eyes and assured him he would recover in a day. The excruciating pain sent him, accompanied by the company doctor, to an eye specialist that informed him the water treatment had severely burned his eyes and he might lose eyesight permanently. He remained blind for one year before his eyesight returned. From the time of the accident, he received no assistance from his employer. This was a difficult time; his eyesight was impaired and he didn't have employment. His savings amounted to \$25.00. With an additional \$25.00 borrowed from his brother, he began an automotive garage business on South La Cadena Avenue.

And so Sr. Durango began a new life based on a dicho (saying) "Primero tiene que gatear antes de andar." "First you must crawl before you can walk." With determination and a few dollars he reestablished himself.

During the World War II years, military convoys regularly passed his establishment. They broke down often, and Mr. Durango and his crew repaired them at no charge. Each time the military made a note of his name and address. He was eventually called to report to the local draftboard for military service. He was exempted, however. They cited his contribution to the convoys. Eventually the military presented him with a certificate of appreciation for his contribution.

Sr. Durango has lived in South Colton over 66 years. During his youth he was a friend of an elderly man, Miguel Espinosa, who was one of the original New Mexican settlers to live in the Agua Mansa settlement back in 1843. The man had relocated to South Colton and spent a great deal of time with Sr. Durango. Sr. Durango would frequently provide Miguel Espinosa with fresh venison and other game. Sr. Durango recalled Miguel Espinosa's version of the settlement of Agua Mansa and how he came to live in the San Bernardino Valley:

"San Bernardino Valley ranchers had a considerable problem with desert Indians making off with livestock. (Don

Antonio Maria) Lugo possessed one of the largest mercedes (land grants) in the region. He arranged with seven New Mexican traders, who used to come to California to obtain mules, to exchange land in return for their services fighting raiding Indians. They agreed and set back to New Mexico to bring their families back to the San Bernardino Valley.

"While en route back to New Mexico, the group was attacked by Indians and Miguel Espinosa was struck by an arrow. As he lay mortally wounded he told the group: 'Muchachos, this is as far as I accompany you, but I want you to promise to bring my woman when you return. She is going to have a child and I am certain it will be a boy. Here is my gun so you can give it to her, and she can give it to my son.' Senora Espinosa did have a boy who was named after his father, Miguel Espinosa. The return trip took several months, and on arrival in the San Bernardino Valley, they camped at La Politana (presently the Bunkerhill area of San Bernardino). Sr. Lugo didn't keep his promise about their land, and just as they had given up and were ready to return to New Mexico, Juan Bandini, owner of the Jurupa Land Grant, made them the same offer that Lugo had.

"The first dwelling the group constructed was for the Widow Espinosa, and then they constructed the remaining houses. Their little settlement became known as La Placita.

Subsequent flooding of the Santa Ana River destroyed most of their houses, and so people relocated, some to the south bank of the river and others on the northern bank and started the settlement of Agua Mansa."

Sr. Durango still has the gun handed down by Miguel Espinosa to his son. It was presented to him in appreciation for his friendship and assistance over many years. The gun is a long-barreled Colt 41 and has inscribed on it "Colonel Samuel Colt of New York of America." (See Figure 9.)

Sr. Durango recalled other friendships with descendants of the New Mexican pioneers that lived in his community. They enjoyed socializing and music and were very partial to dancing La Jota⁵, a Mexican dance with intricate steps and music. Musicians played guitar, the cello and the violin at their many social gatherings. Women dressed in their best finery in long dresses and wore arracadas which complemented their attire. (Arracadas are very ornate dangling earrings.) He also recalled a community barber, Cristobal el barbero. Every week three old men would play the cello, violin and guitar to entertain his customers.

Another of Sr. Durango's reminiscences is a folk tale about a well-known member of the community, Juan Caldera. Juan Caldera was the proprietor of a small shop. It was generally believed that Caldera had discovered a cache of

gold on the site of a former relay station which had existed across the street from the Alvarado home on the corner of Rancho Avenue and Agua Mansa Road. The Alvarado house was situated on the main road to Los Angeles. Relay teams came through and stopped at the station en route to Los Angeles. At times they buried part of the gold they carried. The community believed this was the source of the Caldera wealth. Juan Caldera, Jr., obtained money from his father and constructed a public swimming pool in South Colton for use by the Mexican community. He also constructed a ballroom and a baseball park close by. While digging was in progress for the swimming pool, a large olla (ceramic container) was unearthed. Mr. Durango recalled visiting old Juan Caldera who showed him stacks of \$20 gold pieces. The tale ends sadly, however, as Caldera married a woman who ran off with all his gold.

Sr. Durango displayed keen appreciation for his many years' association with the descendants of the four Europeans that settled here--Cornelius Jensen, Peter C. Peters, Frank Young and Mr. Smith. Miguel Espinosa told Sr. Durango that these four men originally arrived in San Diego on a German vessel. From there they made their way north and stopped at the Alvarado house located on the southwest corner of Rancho Avenue and Agua Mansa Road. They remained and married the four Alvarado daughters. They all

established prominent pioneer families in San Bernardino Valley.

There is controversy about this version of local history, and Sr. Durango is acutely aware that his differs from published accounts. Jensen, Smith, Peters and Young are generally believed to have traveled south from San Francisco. However, Sr. Durango remains adamant that his version of events is correct because his source was Espinosa, the New Mexican pioneer.

Rev. Jose Valencia

Rev. Jose Valencia was a colorful and energetic figure. He had experienced persecution during Mexico's Revolution and fled to the United States in 1928. He served in churches from Calexico to San Ysidro in California, and finally settled at San Salvador Church in 1937 where he remained until his death in 1966. In some ways, Rev. Valencia was handicapped; he was from a different culture and was not familiar with the customs or language of the United States.

He was described as "loudspoken, a lover of sports and frank in expression" by a parishioner. Religious observances were not dull affairs under his tenure; they were colorful and lively affairs: the Posadas at Christmas (a re-enactment of the Holy Family's seeking shelter at the

inn) and the Easter celebrations were noisy and exciting. People from surrounding communities came to San Salvador Church to observe the symbolic burning of Judas. (This was a large paper mache figure which symbolically represented Judas.) It danced a lively jig suspended in the air by ropes in front of the church after services. Then it was blown apart by firecrackers imbedded within making noise and smoke much to the crowd's delight (Mr. Jimenez 1987). (See Figure 5.)

R. Morales

Agriculture, particularly citrus work, often offered the only employment available to people from South Colton. One informant, Sr. Morales, age 66, recalled his experiences in working in the groves. As the oldest son in a large family, he felt a responsibility to work and contribute to the family's income. At age 14 he left public school and began his 20-year experience in citrus work. The majority of citrus workers were Mexican-Americans. At times they began work in the dark in order to finish a large orchard. On any given day, employees of the packing houses were responsible for designating which groves were to be worked. Then with a work crew of 15-18 men, the foreman drove the crew to the groves.

If the groves were heavily laden with fruit, workers

were pleased; it meant they would increase their earnings that day. Average workers picked from 35-40 boxes, and exceptional workers were able to fill 100 boxes daily. In the earliest years there weren't any sanitary facilities for workers. They were forced to go out among the trees. Occasionally workers fell off ladders and were injured.

The actual work involved climbing ladders placed against the fruit trees and starting from the top and working down the tree until it was cleared of fruit. Implements used were clippers held by hand straps. Workers had to be careful not to leave long stems on the fruit as they would puncture other fruit and cause them to rot. Winters were particularly hard because frost was a severe problem. When oranges were ruined by frost, they were discarded until it was discovered that cattle relished them.

Workers were able to work in citrus almost year around. First to mature were the navel oranges; then the grapefruits and Valencia groves would be in season. Since the grapefruit and Valencia seasons overlapped, workers divided the week between the two.

During the 1940s and World War II years, labor shortages forced women to be employed working the groves for the first time. Generally they only picked fruit from the lower parts of trees and men took care of the rest. Finally the government imported Mexican Nationals under special

labor programs and laws were finally enacted to improve working conditions and increase wages for all workers.

Maintenance of the citrus groves was a year around activity. Workers watered, pruned, fertilized and sprayed insecticide to keep orchards producing well. The foreman played an important role in citrus work. Generally workers lived close to one another and each morning they walked to the foreman's house. The foreman kept a one and a-half ton truck at home on which the ladders were piled high. The truck had running boards alongside, and workers would climb on the truck and sit atop the ladders; others would stand on the running boards while the truck was in motion. It was the foreman's daily task to carry water in large metal containers, and each worker was supposed to carry a water canteen for his own use. The foreman also kept the tally of his crew's work. At the end of the week, on Saturdays at noon, each man was paid in cash for his work. The men also kept an individual tally of their own and would reconcile their figures with the foreman's record. As supervisor, the foreman earned substantially more money than the other workers (Morales 1987).

Bracero Program

The Bracero Program (Helping Arms) provided farm labor contracting between the United States and Mexico from

1941-1951. The program was intended to ease manpower shortages created by mobilization during World War II. These workers were used primarily in agriculture, but they also worked in railway construction and maintenance. Under the Bracero Program, a labor pool was recruited within Mexico that provided laborers within 48 hours notice. Under this agreement no employers were denied access to the labor pool. Workers were provided whenever employers proved their assistance was essential. Under the agreement, Braceros were not to be encouraged to remain in the United States, and discrimination against them was prohibited. This provision, according to informants, was flagrantly violated. The Bracero Program was extended by Public Law 78 enacted in July 1951. From 1950-1960 over 3,300,000 Braceros were employed in the United States. They were essential to the agricultural economies of Texas, California, New Mexico and Arkansas and were also used in many other states as well (Galarza 1964:15).

Valentina Colima

The importance of family in the culture is evident in the life experiences of Sra. Valentina Colima, age 72. She was born in South Colton in 1916, and lived in the community 66 years. She is a good-humored woman with a hearty laugh. As one of nine children, she spent a good deal of time

working from a very young age. When school was out at the end of the school year in June, others began their summer vacation, but Sra. Colima's family began their season as migrant agricultural workers. They were gone from the community from June until November.

Their working season began in Hemet harvesting apricots. There was no shelter so the men collected branches from apricot trees and constructed rude huts for them to live in. Years later the growers provided workers with tents. She laughed heartily as she recalled wash days when she helped her mother, and in the company of the other women, improvised a "laundromat" by the water faucet.

Everyone in the family had a particular job. Men picked the apricots and the women cut and sorted. She started cutting when she was only seven years old. When the apricot season ended, they returned to South Colton just long enough to resupply and then they left to work in the fields in Northern California. They harvested grapes, plums, peaches, tomatoes and cotton. Natural water sources were plentiful in Northern California. Rivers supplied the family's needs both for bathing and recreation. She recalled the "good times" spent in the company of her family as they frolicked in the water (Colima 1987).

Juanita Cruz

Senora Juanita Cruz, age 67, was born in South Colton in 1922 to immigrants from Mexico. Her father arrived in 1912 and her mother in 1918. Her father's earliest employment involved the transportation of newly arrived Mexican immigrants from the train depot to their destinations in South Colton, and this is how they became acquainted. Her mother came from a prominent family that had been uprooted by the Mexican Revolution. The young man courted the young woman through letters, eventually asking permission to marry her. Once consent was given, the young man's father insisted the young woman stop working. (Upon her arrival she had obtained work in a Riverside laundry.) On their betrothal, the young woman became her fiancée's responsibility, and it was considered unseemly for her to work. From that time on the young woman received a semanario, or a weekly stipend, plus food such as fruit and vegetables. It was the custom in their culture for young men to support the young woman from the time of betrothal. After a specified period of waiting which was set by her family, the couple married in San Salvador Church in 1920.

From the very beginning of the marriage, the couple's goal was to return to Mexico. Many immigrants wanted to return to their homeland. Thus it became an important objective to preserve their native culture as much as

possible and pass it along to their children. It was important to them that their children be raised properly according to their customs.

The parents spoke Spanish and the children attended Spanish-speaking schools that were held in private homes. They were taught to read and write Spanish as well as mathematics. Girls were taught embroidery and cooking skills. An important aspect of this schooling was the reglas de urbanidad, or the rules of proper etiquette. Children spent four hours daily in these schools.⁶

Sra. Cruz's parents were strict with their six children. But they also believed that girls were very special and should receive special consideration in their upbringing. So, while the boys in the family attended public school, Sra. Cruz was sent to private Catholic school in San Bernardino at Our Lady of Guadalupe School.

Economically, the family was very poor, and life was difficult in every way. Her mother was educated in the fine arts, and her father taught himself to read and write. He took correspondence courses in automobile mechanics and eventually started an automotive business out of his home. Tuberculosis struck the family with devastating results. First the father became ill. The area's hospitals would not accept him because he was not an American citizen. If he had gone to the hospital for treatment, their home would

have been confiscated by the state, and the family would have been left homeless. Although every precaution was taken to prevent spread of the disease by the family (i.e. boiling dishes and bedding), two other family members contracted tuberculosis.

A younger sister contracted the disease and remained bedridden for a year. By the time the youngest son in the family contracted tuberculosis, Sra. Cruz and her sister were employed and financially able to place him in a private sanitarium in Los Angeles. Only the affluent were generally treated at the Barlow Sanitarium. Her brother's association with professionals there dramatically influenced his life. As a result he went on to attend universities, received a doctorate in education, and became a superintendent of schools in the East.

Jose Sosa

Sr. Sosa was born in 1897 in Leon, Guanajuato in Mexico. This gentleman recalled witnessing several battles that occurred in 1914 at the height of the Mexican Revolution in his home town. His family was opposed to the war and avoided taking sides in the conflict. Instead they concentrated on their work and family. In 1914 Sr. Sosa witnessed a confrontation between the forces of Victoriano Huerta and Venustiano Carranza, the two principal figures of

the Mexican Revolution. The battle took place on the Calle Real de San Miguel in Leon. It lasted several hours, and when it was over, many of Leon's businesses had been burned. The Carransistas were victorious, and they executed a man from the community because he was sympathetic to the opposing side.

Sr. Sosa and his wife immigrated to the United States in search of economic opportunity. In 1920 he worked as a laborer in the railroad, mining and agriculture industries in Newton, Kansas, and in New Mexico. He earned \$2.75 per day as a plumber, fitter and oilman in the mines. He recalled that in New Mexico there were organizations that assisted Mexican workers which served as recreation and aid societies. Although the mines employed Anglo and Mexican workers, the camps were segregated into distinct living districts, one for Anglo and the other for Mexican workers. He migrated to California, and in Los Angeles worked for 50 cents an hour in construction. He improved his economic situation by going to Fresno to pick prunes for 10-cents per box. Then in 1928 he migrated to South Colton where his first employment was selling ice cream.

Sr. Sosa was a gregarious man involved in his community. Once, when he was selling his ice cream bars to a group of agricultural laborers in Santa Ana, he inadvertently became spokesman for an impromptu labor

strike. In broken English he explained to the grower the need for an increase in income for the workers. (The workers received a one-cent raise.) Then he finished selling his ice cream and went home.

This desire to speak out did land him in difficulty. In 1950 he was arrested by the local police when he attended a union organizing meeting. Of all the people at the meeting, he was the only person arrested. He was detained without charges for three days and threatened with deportation. The community rallied behind him and hired a lawyer to represent him. He was released after his family posted a \$500 bond. The authorities were adamant that he had communist connections. In a subsequent hearing on the case, he was cleared of all charges.

Rosita Romero

Rosita Romero was born in South Colton in 1913. Her father immigrated to South Colton from Jalisco, Mexico, and her mother was born in El Paso, Texas. Her father arrived in South Colton in 1912 with the intention of earning just enough money to enable him to return to Jalisco and live on a ranchito (small ranch). He constructed his house in South Colton across the street from a family whose oldest daughter interpreted letters written to him in English.

They were soon married and had two sons and a daughter. Sr. Romero began a small tienda de abarrotes (grocery store) on "O" Street right next to the railroad tracks. Senora Romero operated the store, and after school, the children helped out. In those days it was the custom to give customers pilon (gratuity) in appreciation for their patronage. When customers paid their credit bill in full, they were given, depending on the number of children in the family, a gift of candy, fruit or other goods.

As she was growing up she hadn't been aware of the separation of the town's two cultures, Mexican and Anglo-European. This was so primarily because her community was composed entirely of Mexican people. This separation of cultures didn't become evident until she was older and attended schools outside the immediate community. She felt there was a certain innocence in not being aware of this separation between cultures. She said "it was a natural thing to live among Mexicans because they sent Mexicans to South Colton; so South Colton belonged to the raza" (race--referring to Mexican people).

Senora Romero met her husband at a convention of the Alianza Hispano-Americana (Hispanic-American Alliance) held in Redlands, a community located east of Colton. (Senor Romero had migrated to the area, alone, at the age of fourteen from Sinaloa, Mexico.) In order to attend this

convention, people had to be invited by a member of the Alianza. She had friends through her involvement in music that sponsored her membership in the Alianza. Because she was active in a music group in the community, she often attended gatherings of various sorts--fiestas (festivals), parties and lodge events. She performed musically on many different occasions. She was very young, just fifteen years old, and was well chaperoned by her fellow musicians, many of whom were married and had families. They were solicitous of her welfare because of her youth. Her fellow musicians treated her with the utmost deference and respect as they traveled and performed throughout the area.

The group performed where invited in San Bernardino and surrounding communities. In time a group of her father's friends banded together and formed an association that opened the Tivoli. The Tivoli was a large hall located on the corner of La Cadena and O Streets where families gathered for entertainment. At the Tivoli a group of young women got together and formed a small orchestra. They played piano, saxophone, drums, banjo, and violin, and the director rounded out the group and played trumpet. The director taught them to play popular music for singing and dancing.

Senora Romero has the distinction of being the first queen of the Fiestas Patrias in the community. The Fiestas were two-day celebrations held to commemorate Mexico's

independence from Spain in 1821. The community held a parade, and trucks were gaily decorated in red, white and green where the queen and her court were seated. Musicians played music atop another decorated truck. Little girls were all dressed up in white dresses and white shoes. It was an enjoyable experience. Even now when she returns to Colton to visit, she is still asked "Que dice la reina?" "What does the queen say?" (Romero 1988).

Esteban Limon

Many of South Colton's inhabitants lived in secciones (railroad section hand housing) located adjacent to railroad lines located in the northeast, northwest and western sections of the community. Senor Esteban Limon was born in South Colton in 1918. He grew up in a seccion located alongside the Southern Pacific Railroad lines on the west side. His father worked at the California Portland Cement Plant which was within walking distance from their home. Senor Limon often took his father's lunch to the Plant, and so became acquainted with workers there.

On one occasion when he delivered lunch, he complained to his father about the lack of recreational facilities in South Colton. There was only a small handball court on the west side. The Plant had an area set aside for recreation adjacent to the Plant, but this was restricted for

employees' use only. When Sr. Limon was overheard by his father's supervisor, the supervisor called him into his office to discuss the situation further. Sr. Limon felt intimidated; he was not used to dealing with authority figures. But he pressed on because he felt the community had genuine need for recreation facilities.

The supervisor requested that Sr. Limon attend the very next City Council meeting and present his case. At the time three members of the City Council were officials of the Portland Cement Company. After Sr. Limon presented his concerns regarding recreation facilities in South Colton, the Council indicated that land donated by the Portland Cement Company would be designated for a park to serve the community in South Colton.

The City Council requested that Sr. Limon arrange for a group of community representatives to assist in the selection of a suitable location for the park. At that time, the local mortuary owned an extra long vehicle that was used to take clients to the cemetery when selecting plots for burial. This vehicle was pressed into service and eight or ten community representatives, each one dressed up in his finest attire, were taken throughout South Colton in search of the best location for a park.

The Cement Plant owned a ballpark at Third and O Streets. But the location was deemed unacceptable because

of its proximity to the Plant. There were fears there might be danger on those occasions when blasting took place. Instead, a location at Pine and O Streets was selected. It had a vineyard and the soil was extremely sandy, but there was more land available. The site was selected. Then the City Engineer requested that the group arrange for community people to come to the location and put in the necessary water lines. He indicated he thought not many people would come. Instead on the appointed day a large crowd gathered. All ages were represented, from school age boys to the oldest male members of the community. They dug the trenches for the main line and laterals for the community park. The park was named South Colton Park (Limon 1989).

Senor Limon expressed enormous satisfaction at having been the catalyst for obtaining a park for the community. On Memorial Day, May 30, 1966, the park was re-dedicated as Veterans' Park.

Sr. Limon's connection with the park continued. He was hired by the City to maintain the park. With the assistance from WPA workers, most of whom lived in the community, he planted all the trees. The community rallied around Sr. Limon and assisted him so the park would flourish.

Prior to his employment in the park, Sr. Limon had spent his summers working in the City's summer recreation program in the community. He served the community's

youngsters out of the handball courts on the west side. He provided them with all sorts of games to keep them entertained. Eventually Sr. Limon became the driving force behind the community's well-known softball team, the Colton Mercuries.

Initially his idea was to develop a team that would bring credit not only to players but to the community as well. He set out to recruit the best players from surrounding communities. All the players on the team were Mexican-American. The purpose for this restriction was to field a team that represented the ethnic make-up of the community; one that would perform outstandingly against teams from the dominant society, thereby proving Mexican-American players were equal in ability to their competitors. Teams from Etiwanda, Ontario, Pomona, Highgrove, San Bernardino and Colton competed in the American League. Several times the Colton Mercuries were rejected for membership in the league. Eventually the Mercuries were allowed to participate. The team was finally accepted into the League for economic reasons. The Mercuries drew large crowds of Mexican-Americans to their games, and as attendance increased, so did league revenues.

Some teams in the League were paid very well, and the teams were very strong. The Mercuries on the other hand, raised their revenues by taking up collections during their

games. Businesses that supported them were advertised through the public address system. Even so it wasn't long before the Mercuries picked up fans in other cities. Their superior sportsmanship, which was constantly drilled into the team, was a large factor for this. Players were instructed never to argue with the umpire and to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. Their fans increased rapidly. Next Sr. Limon entered his team in the San Bernardino League where they would play hardball. The Mercuries were accepted into Triple A ball in the American League. Triple A teams came from the Los Angeles area to Colton to play against the Mercuries. The Mercuries were always the home team. Since South Colton Park had no dressing room facilities, an agreement was reached with the school district that allowed the facilities at nearby Wilson School to be used by visiting teams.

It should be noted that recreation facilities existed in North Colton--the Municipal Park and swimming facilities. These were not open to Hispanics from South Colton. Colton was not unique in these restrictions. In neighboring San Bernardino, a civil suit filed in 1939 against the City by Reverend R. Nunez, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, enjoined the City from excluding Mexican-Americans from the City's recreational facilities (Acuna 1988:239).

Gloria Leon

Senora Leon's father immigrated to the United States in 1916. He worked for the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. His first wife died during the influenza epidemic of 1917. He traveled around the country taking his five children with him. They lived in a boxcar on the railroad. Eventually he settled in South Colton so his family could be educated. Senora Leon was born in 1924. Her father purchased property on Seventh Street and opened a store called La Perla (Pearl) on the corner of Seventh and N Streets.

The family lived in the heart of the South Colton community. they knew many of the people in the community and witnessed much of its history. People used to gather on street corners to talk and discuss different problems they had in common as immigrants from Mexico. Senora Leon became acquainted with many people, learned about their problems and witnessed the different strategies they used for organizing to resolve problems.

She accompanied her father when he delivered goods to Belltown in Riverside. On their return, they often stopped at La Placita. The inhabitants of La Placita maintained friendly relationships with the people of South Colton. In fact the descendants of the founders of La Placita, the Trujillo and Espinosa children, attended the

local Garfield School in South Colton.

Senora Leon also recalled walking to Agua Mansa Cemetery. She has several relatives buried there: "There isn't much difference now from the way it was, except there was a river on the edge of the cemetery." There was a little creek that emptied into the Santa Ana River, and they used water from the creek to water flowers at the cemetery. She recalled the cemetery the way it was before the vandalism. An extensive number of markers have been vandalized and are now missing. She also mentioned she knew some of the inhabitants from Agua Mansa that relocated to South Colton.

Senora Leon's father stressed the value of education to their family. He stressed pride in their ethnicity as well. Senora Leon became a community activist, and continues to perform community work. She has been president of several of the mutual aid organizations of South Colton. Originally she joined them because her parents were members. She has served as president of Trabajadores Unidos and is currently president of Sociedad Progresista Mexicana. (These organizations are reviewed in Chapter 6.) It is her goal to have South Colton recognized as the founding site for the Progresista organization. It is currently the largest Mexican-American organization in the state. It has 70

chapters and 1700 members.

Her activism and involvement in community affairs is a direct result of the hardships her parents experienced when they migrated to South Colton. "South Colton has changed through the years. People were closer and better knit than now. There has been a getting away from the close knit and helping mode of the past" (Leon 1989).

CHAPTER FIVE
THE LASTING IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION

Richard T. Schaefer asserts that "The agents of conflict, prejudice and discrimination take their toll on people" (1988:92). This was indeed the case insofar as the informants in this study were concerned. Although discrimination is not the major focus of this study, it is a significant topic in informants' experiences and cannot be overlooked. Virtually every informant addressed this issue as being significant to him or her. Informants endured material deprivation and hard physical labor when they settled in South Colton, yet they were more impressed by the discrimination they encountered. They related personal episodes concerning discrimination they suffered that made a lasting impact on their lives and behaviors, and consequently limited their opportunities.

One woman recalled that her children were ridiculed by non-Hispanics because of the ethnic food in their school lunches. To avoid the pain of the situation, her children segregated themselves to the school bleachers and ate alone. Another informant expressed continued distress over her first encounter with a school administrator: "She treated Mexican children as if they weren't human." Another

informant recalled when she was absent from school recovering from a bout with the measles. Towards the end of the two-week convalescence period she was well enough to venture into North Colton to shop. The local truant officer stopped her and asked, "Where have you been?" She explained the situation. The truant officer ordered her to return to South Colton immediately where she belonged "...because I don't want you contaminating others in North Colton."

A man recalled what it had been like to attend the local segregated movie theatre and be forced to always sit in the least desirable seats. Theatre attendants were confounded when his cousin asked where she should sit since she was half Mexican and half Anglo. Most informants recalled with anger the city's policy of allowing Mexicans to use public pool facilities in North Colton one day each week--the day the pool was scheduled for cleaning. They all recalled the signs in the local restaurant and other establishments that said "We don't serve Blacks, Mexicans or Dogs."

That these individuals recalled such episodes isn't surprising. They were difficult experiences. However, what is noteworthy are the enduring and powerful negative feelings these episodes generated which have not diminished over so many years. Some of these episodes occurred over forty years in the past, yet informants recalled them with

clarity and obvious pain. One elderly woman remarked that she still is not comfortable mingling in mixed society. This may be true for all of them.

According to the oral histories, discrimination affected their community. Except for employment, inhabitants were isolated within a limited area. The residential, recreational, and religious areas were contained within their small community. This forced the development of solidarity within the community and contributed to sociality as well. The isolation also contributed to the community's retention of cultural homogeneity that remained well into the mid-1940s when the post-World War II era began.

CHAPTER SIX
ADAPTATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Lenadores

In 1916 two lenadores (woodcutters) began a business in South Colton. In a sense they are the founders of the community. They purchased railway cars from the Pacific Fruit Express Railway (P.F.E.) which was located at the time on East "M" Street. They used horses and wagons to transport the wood from these railway cars to their home where they separated out the reusable lumber. The best wood was then sold to the inhabitants of South Colton. Many homes in the community were constructed with this recycled lumber. The remainder of the wood was sold as firewood to the community. The lenadores were in business over forty⁹ years (Cruz 1988).

Districts

The community of South Colton was small. It encompassed approximately three square miles. Informants described at least six distinct districts within its boundaries. These districts functioned as identifiers for residents. For example if someone lived in La Reserva

(reservation) it was immediately understood this referred to the northwest sector of the community. La Calle Cinco (Fifth Street) referred to the oldest residential section in the community located on Fifth Street. La Calle Siete (Seventh Street) identified the most vigorous business district and recreation area, as well as the central area in close proximity to San Salvador Church. La Paloma (Pigeon) identified the less developed region located east of La Cadena Avenue. La Paloma was given its name by the earliest settlers. Their rough jacaes (huts) resembled bird cages and the description remained through the years. Agua Mansa district identified the sparsely developed area located along the southwestern boundary of the community.

Secciones (sections) district referred to those areas adjacent to the Southern Pacific reserved for railroad employees and their families, primarily those located in the northeast section of the community. (See Figure 3.)

Recreation

The community had a recreation complex, El Corralon, (corral) located on South Fifth Street and Agua Mansa Road that accommodated different activities. Baseball games and open-air boxing were some of the activities held there. The community utilized Caldera Plunge for its aquatic needs (see Figure 7).

One of the favorite recreational activities in the community was dancing. It was the custom in early years for entire families to attend the bailes (dances) at the Tivoli. The Tivoli was one of several halls in the community. (There was a dance hall owned by Juan Caldera but it had a reputation as a rough place and was avoided by many people.) Community people also attended bailes at the La Placita community located in Riverside. People who lived there referred to themselves as Placitenos (people from La Placita). Their dances were held on bare ground. They watered the ground for a week in advance; even so, ladies' shoes didn't survive more than one dance at La Placita.

The primary social events of the year for the community were the celebrations held each September 15th and 16th. These fiestas (festivals) commemorated the defeat of the Spanish by Mexico in 1821. Streets were blocked off and chairs were set up to accommodate spectators. The stage was decorated in the bright colors of the Mexican flag--red, white and green. Large posters of the Independence heroes framed the stage. In the evenings, adults spoke about Mexico and the heroes of the independencia (independence). Tribuna libre (free forum) would then be declared and anyone who cared to do so was free to get up on stage and express himself.

In the earliest years the celebrations focused strictly

on patriotic speeches and music. Later on the programs became more structured. Children dressed in patriotic costumes and recited poetry in Spanish (after much drilling by parents). The reinas (queens) were added much later. Young women interested in becoming queen of the fiestas sold tickets. These were considered votes for the queen's title. Entire families participated in selling votes throughout the community to help their family member become queen. Everyone looked forward to this social event, particularly the children who received splendid new clothes to wear (Cruz 1988). (See Figure 4.)

Folk Healing

When illness struck or there was impending childbirth, community members relied on the services of the town's physicians. Informants recalled the earliest practitioners making housecalls in horses and buggies and also in the earliest automobiles. However, home remedies were also utilized extensively in the community. An informant recalled the benefits of drinking tea made from the Sauco Tree for specific illnesses (i.e. influenza and measles).

One informant was a participant in folk healing practices in the community. This type of folk healing has been referred to as curanderismo, although the informant does not acknowledge this connection. Roots of these

practices extend back to Greek humoral pathology which was practiced by the Moors during their 700-year occupation of Spain. It was brought to Mesoamerica at the time of the Conquest and has been passed down through the centuries (Currier 1966:251).

The clients involved in this folk healing were first, second and third generation Mexican American males and females of all ages. Ailments treated were ojo (evil eye), empacho (severe constipation), susto (shock), golpes de aire (debilitating attacks of cold), and tirisados (infant melancholia). The different conditions have different symptoms and require different therapies. Uneven pupils signal the condition of ojo. Golpes de aire appear to have magical origins and can occur suddenly to any region of the body. It is treated with manipulations, massage and herbal teas. The treatment for infants who exhibit melancholia and fail to thrive, tirisados, is to dress them completely in red for several days and expose them to the sun for extended periods. Folk healing services were frequently sought by people from surrounding communities, and the demand was unexpectedly high (Colima 1988).

Youth Groups

There were two youth groups that were active in the community. The Asociacion Catolica Juvenil Mexicana

(Association for Mexican Catholic Youth) and Juvenil Catolica Feminina Mexicana (Mexican Catholic Feminine Youth) were originally founded in Mexico. The Diocese of Los Angeles initiated the groups in South Colton and other Mexican communities. The groups met regularly and eventually formed a theatrical group which presented vaudeville, dramas and musical comedy in theaters in Colton and surrounding areas. Grand jornadas (conclaves) were held every six months with more than 500 members participating from surrounding parishes (San Salvador Commemorative Pamphlet 1980:4).

Mutual Aid Societies

One adaptation made by immigrants from Mexico throughout the Southwest was the development of mutual aid societies. These organizations emerged as a direct response to the deprivation and discrimination encountered by these immigrants in the United States. Initially the mutualistas functioned as support groups that aided immigrant families in securing basic needs. In many instances the mutualistas were essential forces that defended early communities, both at the group and individual level, when confronted with injustice (Acuna 1988). These organizations were also instrumental in maintaining the traditional culture as well.

Organizations active in the early community were La

Honorifica¹¹ (Honorific) and La Cruz Azul¹² (Blue Cross) which functioned as aid groups under the auspices of the Mexican Consul (Acuna 1988:174). (See Figure 8.)

South Colton was the original site for two mutualista groups that have remained active for many years. Trabajadores Unidos (United Workers) began in 1917 when the local cement plant attempted to reduce wages by half. Mexican employees protested and many lost employment as a result. The company's action exacerbated the situation, and 150 employees walked out. Workers banded together and formed Trabajadores Unidos as a union. Eventually they were successful and gained a nominal raise and union recognition (Acuna 1988:166). Now Trabajadores Unidos functions primarily as a fraternal organization that provides benefits and social opportunities to its members.

Sociedad Progresista Mexicana (Mexican Progressive Society) began in 1929 as a splinter group from the Zaragosa Society of San Bernardino that had its origins when Mexican community leaders discovered the body of an unidentified Hispanic. The man had obviously lain there unattended for quite some time. The Zaragosa Society was formed to prevent this from recurring. Members agreed to contribute \$1.00 each upon the death of a society member and thus insure suitable burial expenses for the membership (Gonzales 1985:195).

Sociedad Progresista Mexicana currently has 70 chapters throughout California. It is a mutualista that provides benefits to its members as well as educational scholarships for college students. However one of its major functions is to promote traditional culture. All meetings are conducted in Spanish, and Mexican music is a central part of their events.

Another group active in early South Colton was the Alianza Hispano-Americana (Hispanic-American Alliance). This group was founded in 1894 in Tucson, Arizona, and was formed as a mutual aid society that fostered moral and altruistic ideals in the Hispanic community. Pan-Americanism was a central theme for the group. It stressed the importance of shared cultural traits with all of Latin America. Membership was by invitation only. The Alianza was dedicated not only to defend the rights of Hispanics generally, but to increase respect for Hispanics in general. To this end the intellectual and culturally refined were sought for membership. The working class was also encouraged to participate. By 1897 Alianza lodges existed in over 300 Southwestern cities, Illinois and Pennsylvania as well as in Mexico (Gonzales 1985:12).

Other groups served the Hispanic community in Colton generally and did not limit membership to South Colton residents. The American GI Forum and the Community Service

Organization were formed by returning servicemen (around 1948) after the Second World War. Their main objective was to overcome difficulties in securing veterans' rights and to change the intolerable conditions that existed prior to the war. The organizations fostered activism not only as mutual aid societies but they addressed issues regarding education, segregation and the improvement of political opportunities for Mexican Americans in general (Gonzales 1985:18).

Cemetery

Agua Mansa Cemetery was begun by the settlers of Agua Mansa who were the original pioneers to the region. The cemetery was used for 104 years, from 1859-1963. The community of South Colton utilized Agua Mansa Cemetery until its closure. Gravemarkers in the cemetery were made from wood and cement. Many markers have been lost due to the processes of erosion, fires and the extensive vandalism that occurred over time. Few of the gravemarkers were professionally made. Most gravemarkers were made by the families of those interred. Some of the gravemarkers were made by South Colton inhabitants (Cruz 1988).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Wendell H. Oswalt maintains that "Cultural anthropology is especially meaningful...because it helps us to understand ourselves in both our heritage and current mixture of lifestyles" (1986:6). The focus of this research has been to apply cultural anthropological perspectives and a historical overview to gather information unavailable up to now about the early development of the community of South Colton. Many elderly residents of this community can trace their roots to emigration from Mexico in the early 1900s and have been part of the community's development.

The Mexican American immigrant experience that occurred in the early 1900s was a significant episode in the history of the United States. It led to the development of many ethnic enclaves similar to the community that is the focus of this study. The pioneer settlers that participated in this research represent the vanguard of the Hispanic population which resulted from this early migration. Hispanics generally are expected to become the largest minority in the United States by the year 2080 (Schaefer 1988:287).

The key informants in this study were unique in many ways; however, they shared similar experiences. Most of them entered the United States through the same gateway--El

Paso, Texas--where they were recruited by industries eager to employ them as laborers. They worked in other states, and by the time they arrived in South Colton, they had accumulated knowledge and experiences which impacted on their decision to permanently settle in South Colton.

Within the community, they shared similar experiences as well. The majority endured poverty and hard labor in order to survive. Local railroad, citrus and mining industries provided employment as laborers. Some seized opportunity and became successful merchants and entrepreneurs. From an early age, both men and women worked often foregoing education to augment the family income. Women were inclined to fulfill the traditional domestic role, although a surprising number were involved in outside activities in business, teaching and community activism. It is clear that while men retained their traditional roles and were the community leaders, women participated vigorously in community development also.

As a group, they evidence a strong sense of personal dignity and self-respect which may explain in part their enduring feelings about discrimination. Discrimination made a lasting impact on them because it was an affront to their self-concept. It devalued them and their culture. It forced isolation and self-reliance upon them. Significant interaction between community groups never occurred, and

this separation allowed them to retain a marked degree of homogeneity.

"To be outside and inside at the same time," as Barbara Myerhoff (1978:18) noted in describing participant-observation in ethnographic research, was the most challenging aspect of this research. For just as Myerhoff returned to study an elderly Jewish community that represented her cultural roots, I returned to study a group of Mexican-American ancianos (old ones) that represent my cultural background. In ethnographic studies, researchers must maintain a certain distance from sources in order to achieve objectivity. However, unbidden, the ethnographic process became a vital journey that provided knowledge about my cultural origins. The two years I spent performing this research were among the most difficult and curiously satisfying in my life.

The elderly informants shared themselves and their memories generously. In general these informants lack those attributes generally considered important determinants for success in modern society: youth, wealth, political power and status. They possess a strong sense of dignity bordering on formal reserve. They possess a strong sense of their cultural identity and appreciate their role as pioneer settlers of the community. As the daughter of one abuelita (grandmother) said, "Mi mama es una cosa sagrada para mi."

("My mother is sacred to me.") These ancianos are revered in the community, particularly by their families.

They have retained traditional cultural values of familism, strong religious affiliation, adherence to the Spanish language, and still maintain group solidarity.

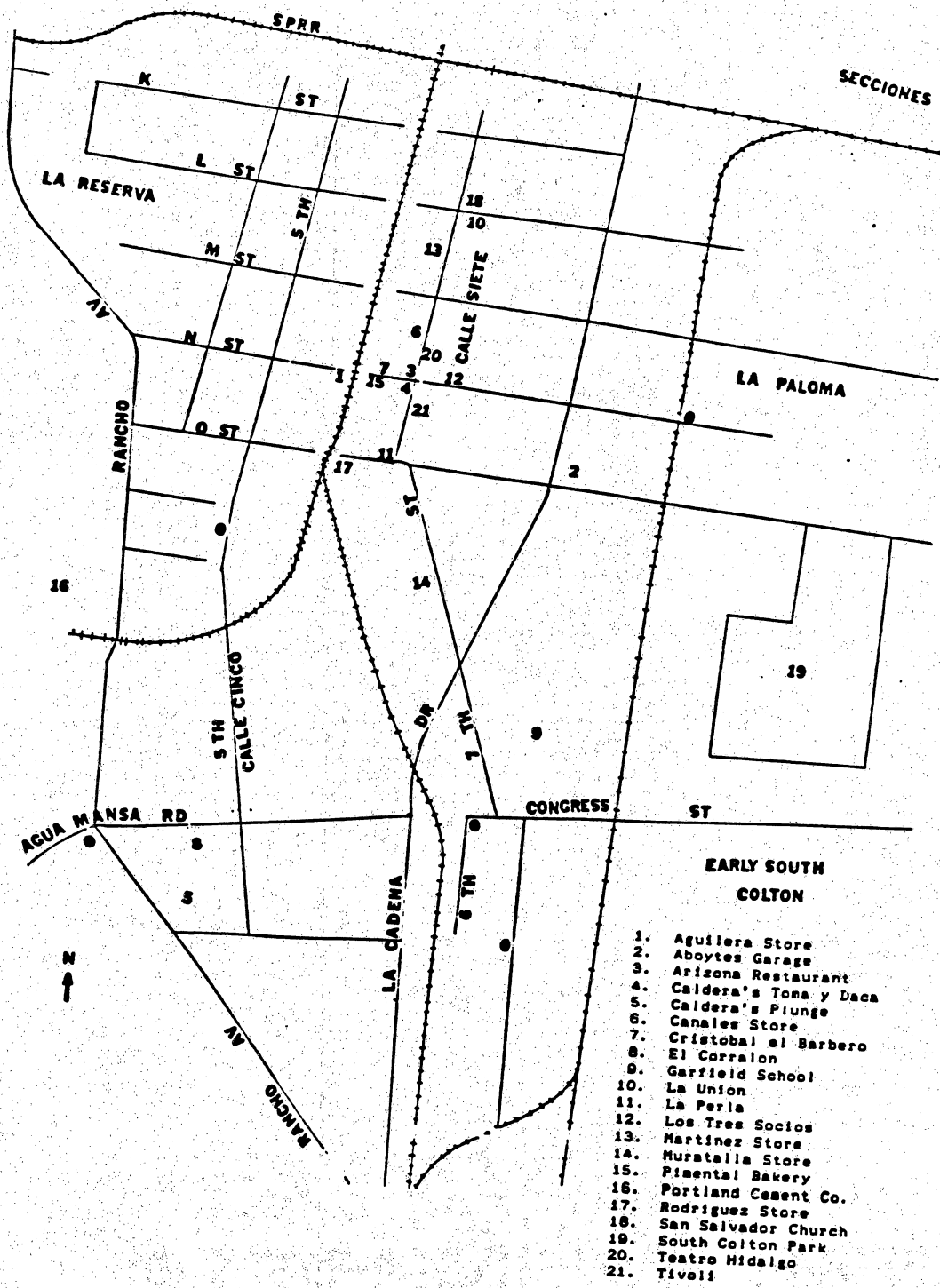
The study indicates there was some diffusion settlement from Agua Mansa into South Colton. It is particularly evidenced by the final relocation of the San Salvador Catholic Church which has been part of the South Colton community since 1893. Descendents from the New Mexican settlers of Agua Mansa eventually diffused to South Colton and were acquainted with some of the informants of this study.

The examination of the development of the community of South Colton should not end here. Future study should be directed at the important issues not covered in depth in this study and should include an examination of the significant changes which have occurred since the beginning of the post-World War II era.

Due to the lack of published information about the development of the South Colton community, I have relied on people's recollections and not on "official" versions of most events to present a composite view of the development of the early community and increase understanding of the Mexican-American immigrant experience of that time. This

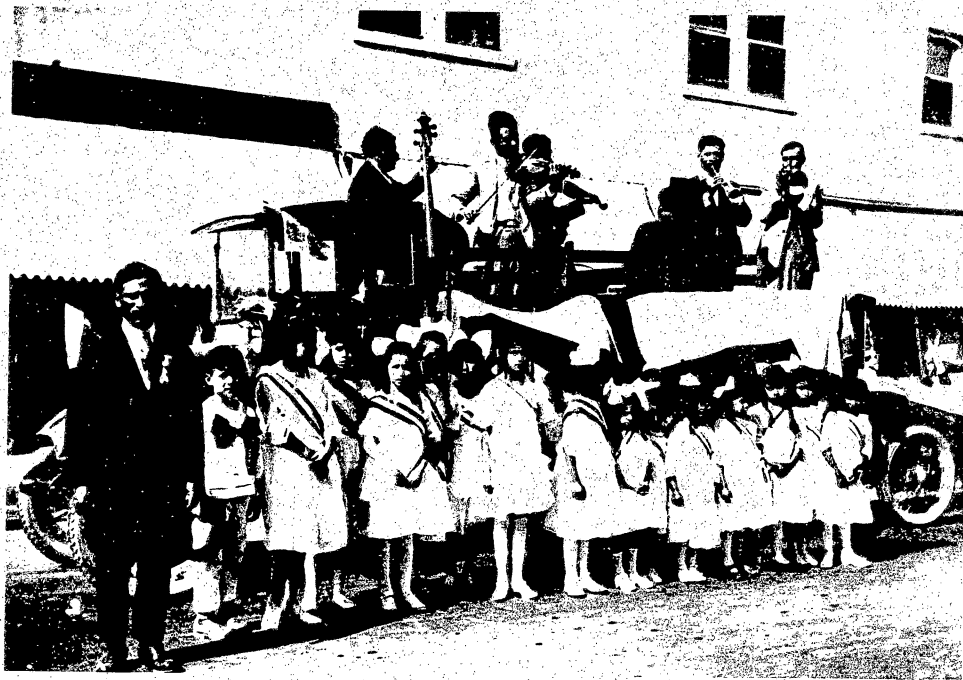
thesis is the significant result of combining a historical perspective with the anthropological emphasis on the interpretations of information obtained from key informants.

It is likely that the experiences chronicled here are representative generally of the Mexican-American immigrant experience of the early 1900s and the subsequent development of similar communities throughout the Southwest.



- EARLY SOUTH COLTON**
1. Aguilera Store
 2. Aboytes Garage
 3. Arizona Restaurant
 4. Caldera's Tona y Daca
 5. Caldera's Plunge
 6. Canales Store
 7. Cristobal el Barbero
 8. El Corralon
 9. Garfield School
 10. La Union
 11. La Perla
 12. Los Tres Socios
 13. Martinez Store
 14. Muratalla Store
 15. Pimental Bakery
 16. Portland Cement Co.
 17. Rodriguez Store
 18. San Salvador Church
 19. South Colton Park
 20. Teatro Hidalgo
 21. Tivoli
- Diffusion settlement from Agua Mansa

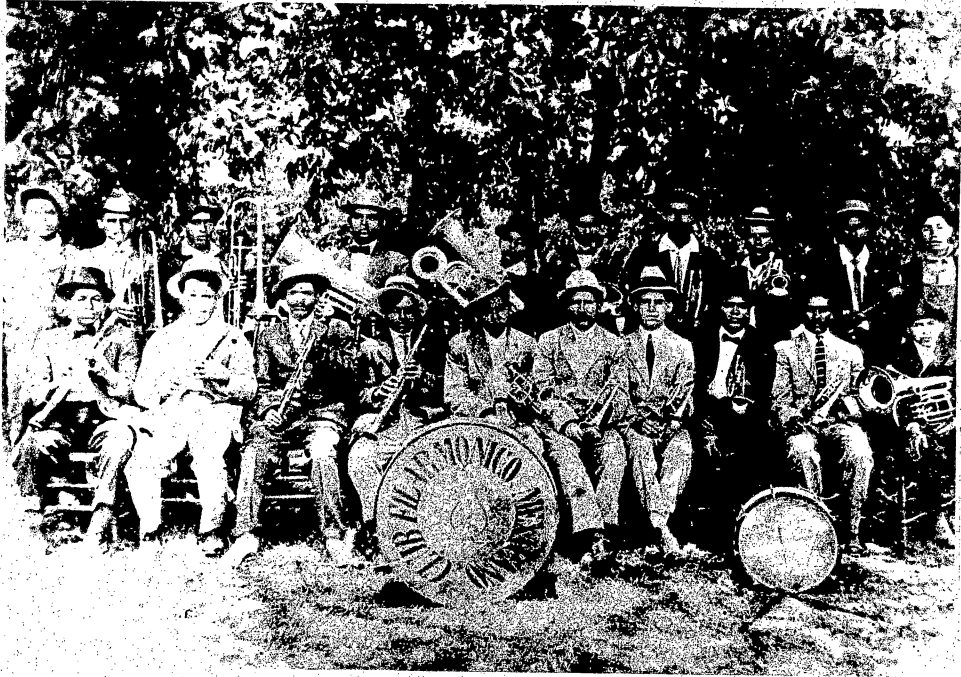
Early South Colton
Figure 3



1928 FIESTAS PATRIAS 16TH OF SEPTEMBER PARADE
(Photograph from private collection of Mr. G. Gomez)
Figure 4



PAPER MACHE FIGURE OF JUDAS - SAN SALVADOR CHURCH
(Photograph from private collection of Mr. G. Gomez)
Figure 5



FILARMONICO MEXICANO CIRCA 1918
COLTON

(Photograph from private collection of Mr. G. Gomez)
Figure 6



1928 OPENING DAY CEREMONIES AT CALDERA PLUNGE
(Photograph from private collection of Mr. G. Gomez)
Figure 7



LA CRUZ AZUL
(Photograph from private collection of Mr. G. Gomez)
Figure 8



COLT 41 - HEIRLOOM FROM NEW MEXICAN PIONEER SETTLER
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. L. Aboytes)
Figure 9

NOTES

1

The actual date of construction of the second San Salvador Church constructed in South Colton on Seventh Street is unclear. The community remained without a church for several years after the church on Fifth Street burned. The church on Seventh Street was constructed some time before 1913.

2

Father Dumetz is credited with naming the San Bernardino Valley on the Feast day of San Bernardino de Sienna which occurred on May 20, 1810. However, the aboriginal inhabitants of the valley had previously named it Guachama which in their language meant "a place of plenty to eat" (Caballeria 1906:38).

3

The San Bernardino Valley had six rancherías. Each ranchería is estimated to have had several hundred inhabitants. The total population in the valley at the time of initial contact is estimated at 1500 (Beattie and Beattie 1939:47).

4

Olive Trujillo Vlahovich was the granddaughter of Teodoro and Peregrina Trujillo. Her grandfather was the son of La Placita patriarch and founder, Lorenzo Trujillo. Her grandfather lived from 1830-1882, and her grandmother lived from 1835-1903. They are both buried at Agua mansa Cemetery. Mrs. Vlahovich's recollections of life in La Placita are tape recorded and available at the Riverside Municipal Museum. The recorded interview is undated.

5

Don Jose del Carmen Lugo (1877:38) described La Jota as a dance for four men and four women. The dance continued on as long as the musicians played.

6

The community had several of these private schools. There were schools on L Street, O Street, 7th Street and in the Las Palomas district. Their function was to educate children in etiquette, mathematics and language skills, and instruction was in Spanish. Teachers in these schools were men and women. The schools were instrumental in enculturating community children into the traditional culture.

7

The early development of South Colton was vigorous. It succeeded to the extent that the community supported several business establishments within its limited boundaries: grocery stores, bakeries, tortillerias, a restaurant, and several recreation facilities.

8

The Portland Cement Company, in donating the land, stipulated that a plaque be erected to read: "The land for this park was presented to the City of Colton...for the primary use of the Mexican people of the City of Colton" (Resolution No. 1028 1939:2).

9

The Colton Semi-Tropic (November 27, 1880) reported a price increase on wood sold in the city by Mexican lenadores. Lenadores were operating in the community before 1900.

10

Mrs. Cruz wrote a weekly column for the local newspaper, The Colton Courier, for three years from 1969-1971. The column was written in Spanish and included information about the South Colton community and its inhabitants. The column was written under a pseudonym.

11

South Colton's chapter of La Honorifica began in 1939. It was a non-political and non-sectarian group. It promoted the general welfare of Mexican Nationals, according to the Colton Daily Courier (June 14, 1939).

12

La Cruz Azul was an organization for women. It was active in performing charitable work among immigrant communities (Acuna 1988:174).

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